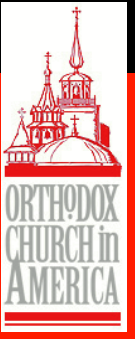


CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

The **O** *Orthodox* **C** *Church*



**Wonderworking
Sitka Icon completes
two month pilgrimage**

■ EPISCOPAL CHANGES

[SWAIKO], Metropolitan Herman is released from duties as Locum Tenens of the Diocese of New England by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. All his other archpastoral duties remain the same/ October 19, 2005.

[LIOLIN], Bishop Nikon of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese was elected Bishop of Hartford and New England by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. He remains Bishop of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese with the title of Bishop of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese/ October 19, 2005.

■ ORDINATIONS

ANTONESCU, Cosmin Gheorghe was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ February 20, 2005.

ARMATAS, Daniel was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at St. Spiridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ June 10, 2005.

ARMATAS, Deacon Daniel was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at St. Spiridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ June 11, 2005.

BEAL, John was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ May 21, 2005.

[BERGER], Monk Calinic was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan Herman on behalf of Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery, Rives Junction, MI. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ August 15, 2005.

BOGDAN, Ioan Iosif was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ September 18, 2005.

BROWNE, Raymond Martin was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Metropolitan Herman at St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ August 28, 2005.

BUJEA, John was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at St. George Cathedral, Regina, SK, Canada. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ April 23, 2005.

CADMAN, Alexander was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Job of Chicago at Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Job and attached to the Diocese of the

Midwest/ July 30, 2005.

JACKSON, Deacon Matthew was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South on behalf of Metropolitan Herman at Holy Resurrection Church, Clinton, MS. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ July 10, 2005.

JACOBS, Deacon Andrew was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ July 29, 2005.

KASHEVAROF, Andrew T. was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Kodiak, AK. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Nikolai and attached to the Diocese of Alaska/ February 12, 2005.

KASHEVAROF, Deacon Andrew T. was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Kodiak, AK. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Nikolai and attached to the Diocese of Alaska/ February 13, 2005.

MACARIE, Deacon Alin Stefan was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Irineu of Dearborn Heights on behalf of Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate at SS. Michael and Gabriel Church, Middle Village, NY. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ July 29, 2005.

MC FATTER, Deacon Gleb was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South at St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas, TX. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Dmitri and attached to the Diocese of the South/ July 31, 2005.

MOSHER, Deacon Joshua S. was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Metropolitan Herman at Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ September 25, 2005.

PEREZ, Dimitri was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ July 29, 2005.

PEREZ, Deacon Dimitri was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon and attached to the Diocese of the West/ July 30, 2005.

STOLERU, Paul Catalin was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Irineu of Dearborn Heights on behalf of Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and Romanian Episcopate at Ascension of the Lord Mission, Montreal, QC, Canada. He is under the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel and attached to the Episcopate/ May 2, 2005.

VALLENS, Alexander was ordained to Holy Diaconate by Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley on behalf of Metropolitan Herman at Transfiguration of Christ Cathedral, Denver, CO. He is under the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman/ May 14, 2005.

VRATO, Gregory James was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Nikon of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese at SS. Peter and Paul Church, Philadel-

phia, PA. He is under the omophorion of Bishop Nikon and attached to the Albanian Archdiocese/ July 10, 2005.

■ ASSIGNMENTS

ADEN, The Rev. Basil is released from duties at St. Raphael of Brooklyn Mission, Quincy, IL and St. Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL and attached to St. Nicholas Church, Kenosha, WI/ October 4, 2005.

ANTONESCU, Deacon Cosmin Gheorghe is attached to Chapel of the Nativity of the Ever Virgin Mary, Grass Lake, MI/ February 20, 2005.

ARMATAS, Deacon Daniel is attached to St. Spiridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA/ June 10, 2005.

ARMATAS, The Rev. Daniel is attached to Holy Trinity/Holy Resurrection Church, Wilkeson/Tacoma, WA/ June 11, 2005.

BASHKO, The V. Rev. Dimitri, who was awaiting assignment, is attached to St. George Cathedral, Chicago, IL/ August 9, 2005.

BEAL, Deacon John is attached to St. Nicholas Church, San Anselmo, CA/ May 21, 2005.

[BERGER], Hierodeacon Calinic is attached to Chapel of the Nativity of the Ever Virgin Mary, Grass Lake, MI/ August 15, 2005.

BOCK, The Rev. Mikel is released from duties at St. Innocent Cathedral, Anchorage, AK and appointed rector of St. Herman Church, Fairbanks, AK/ September 1, 2005.

BOGDAN, Deacon Ioan Iosif is attached to Chapel of the Nativity of the Ever Virgin Mary, Grass Lake, MI/ September 18, 2005.

BONA, Protodeacon Alexis is released from duties at Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, NH and granted Retirement/ October 1, 2005.

BROWNE, Deacon Raymond Martin is attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA/ August 28, 2005.

BUJEA, Deacon John is assigned to St. George Cathedral, Regina, SK, Canada/ April 23, 2005.

BURDIKOFF, The V. Rev. Igor is released from duties as administrator of Holy Trinity Church, Niagara Falls, NY. All his other duties remain the same/ September 1, 2005.

CADMAN, Deacon Alexander is assigned to Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL/ July 30, 2005.

COZBY, The V. Rev. Dimitri is released from duties as dean of the South Central Deanery and St. Anthony the Great Church, San Antonio, TX. He is attached to St. Seraphim Cathedral, Dallas, TX/ August 1, 2005.

DEMKO, Deacon Michael is released from duties at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Milwaukee, WI and from the Diocese of the Midwest, transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia, and attached to the Diocese of Eastern PA, where he awaits assignment/ July 7, 2005.

GASSIOS, The Rev. Paul is released from duties at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Kokomo, IN and is attached to St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, Columbus, OH/ July 1, 2005.

HOROSKY, The V. Rev. John is released from duties at St. John the Divine Church, Monessen, PA and granted retirement/ July 31, 2005.

HOROSKY, The V. Rev. John, who was awaiting assignment in retirement, is attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Basil, Cranberry Township, PA/ July 31, 2005.

The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church [ISSN 0048-2269] is published by the Orthodox Church in America, PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675.

Member of Associated Church Press, Religion News Service, Service Orthodoxe de Presse, and Ecumenical News International.

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SUBSCRIPTION/CIRCULATION OFFICE

Subscriptions are available for \$30.00/year US, \$40.00/year elsewhere. Subscription requests and changes of address should be sent by e-mail to lydia@oca.org, by calling 516.922.0550, by sending a fax to 516.922.0954, or by writing to the following address.

TOC Circulation Office
 PO Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675

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Our Cover

Faithful carry the wonder-working Sitka Icon during one of over six dozen visits the icon made to parishes in the "lower 48" from September 7

to mid-November. Tens of thousands of faithful venerated the icon from coast to coast.

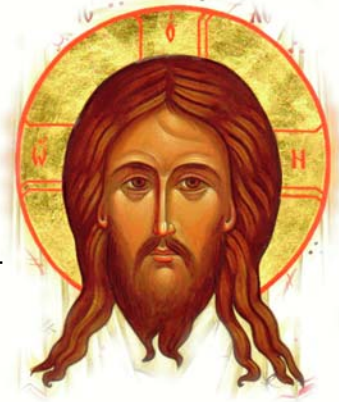


PAGE 17

In This Issue

VOLUME 11 / 11/1 / NOV/DEC 2005

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



- 5 "I Am Who I Am" The incarnation reveals God's love for creation.
- 6 Mission central to Gospel Metropolitan Herman reflects on the importance of mission in the life of the Church.
- 7 The results are in Survey reveals elements essential for parish growth.
- 8 Approaching the Nativity What exactly are we celebrating?
- 8 Acts of God? Christ doesn't send disasters – He overcomes them!
- 9 The malling of religion For too many, the mall has become America's new "House of Worship."
- 10 Nativity Message Metropolitan Herman calls upon the faithful to partake of the divine nature on the Great Feast of the Nativity.
- 11 OCA News, Notes, Notices

- Holy Synod elects Bishop Nikon to NE see.
- Condolences sent after terrorist attack.
- Prayers for ailing Metropolitan Philip.
- Metropolitan Council reviews AAC, finances.
- Fr. Dresko named development director.
- Bishop Tikhon installed.
- Date set for Bishop Nikon's installation.
- Metropolitan Herman speaks at DC ceremony, attends gathering honoring Mikhail Gorbachev.



- Annual stocking drive begins.

- 13 Sitka Icon's pilgrimage concludes Tens of thousands venerate icon.

- 28 North America

- NY site of fifth annual UN prayer service.
- SCOBA hierarchs establish prison ministry.
- New OCMC communications director.
- Waiting to build NY's St. Nicholas Church.
- Armenian bishop elected NCCC president-elect.



- 30 World briefs

- New Patriarch of Jerusalem installed despite Israeli warnings.
- Property returned to OCA's representation church in Moscow.
- Autocephalous churches show support for Ukrainian Church.

FEATURES

- 2 Official
- 4 Editorial
- 10 Up Front
- 18 In Memoriam
- 31 Communities

DEPARTMENTS

- 19 Christian Education
- 20 Stewardship
- 21 Liturgical Music
- 22 Evangelization
- 24 Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry

Orthodox Christianity in Albania: An example we would do well to emulate

Our annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is an experience of joy. “God is with us!” God is with us in Jesus Christ. God in Christ for the sake of humanity became man, became one of us. And the miracle of the presence of God among us continues in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. Our mission as members of the Body of Christ is to preach the Good News of Christ, to follow the way of Christ’s commandments, to suffer in the name of Christ, and to be witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ.

Before Thanksgiving, I traveled to Albania to participate in an international interfaith conference. I was there as vice moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and in that capacity I chaired several sessions of the meeting. Conference participants represented the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities of South East Europe – specifically, the religious communities of Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia.

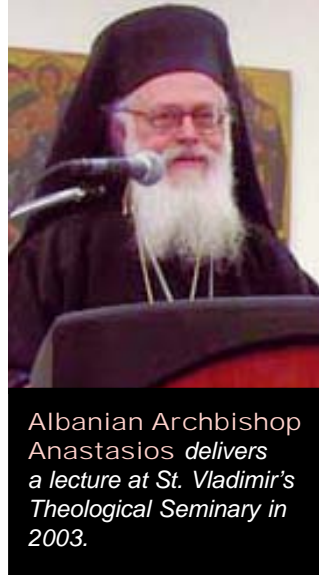
The meeting in Tirana was both difficult and encouraging. The difficulties reflected the violent recent history in the region, the different perspectives of the ethnic and religious communities, and their anxieties about the future. Yet the conversations – which revealed both the disagreements and also the willingness to seek consensus – reflected the hope for peaceful life together.

I was particularly moved by the witness of the Orthodox Church of Albania under the leadership of Archbishop Anastasios. This witness was made evident during the conference in the words spoken by the Archbishop. The Church’s testimony of faith, hope, and love is also given in the story of its resurrection.

Albania under communist rule was unique in its perfect realization of communist atheist ideology. Religion was violently persecuted and marginalized in other communist lands. Only in Albania was religion outlawed, and all religious practice was forbidden. This meant that all churches and mosques were shut down, and in many cases destroyed. The religious life of the Muslim communities and Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities was officially illegal and punishable by imprisonment and death.

Nevertheless, religious faith was treasured secretly by faithful families. One story offers a vivid picture both of persecution and of faith. Since all religious practice was forbidden, painting Easter eggs was also forbidden. Sometimes, faithful Christians would secretly color some eggs, and then would leave some red egg shells on the ground far from their home, thus offering a witness to the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ. In this way, the incarnate and humiliated Christ was present in Albania during the persecutions.

When the communist rule ended in the early 1990’s, the institutions of religious life simply did not exist in Albania. A significant step towards the resurrection of the Orthodox Church in Albania occurred when Archbishop Anastasios was first named Exarch for Albania by the Ecumenical Patriarch, and then Primate of the re-



Albanian Archbishop Anastasios delivers a lecture at St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary in 2003.

newed autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania. The first period of the Archbishop’s ministry in Albania was very difficult. Everything was lacking – material resources, churches, priests. In addition, the ethnic tensions between Albanians and Greeks caused the Archbishop, as an ethnic Greek, to be regarded with deep suspicion and animosity by ethnic Albanians.

The Archbishop’s deep commitment to the Church of Albania and to its suffering people, his dedication to the Church of Albania’s mission and ministry, converted hearts and minds, and opened the way to rebirth. Albania is a small and poor country. In this context, the scale of the Orthodox Church’s rebirth is stunning. Churches have been restored from ruins, and new churches have been built. Monastic life has been renewed. A seminary has been built up, and many priests have been ordained. The Church is engaged in social and educa-

tional work. Youth camps and youth conferences engage children and young people in the life of the Church. Where the old Orthodox cathedral once stood on Tirana’s main square, there is now a hotel. The new cathedral, dedicated to the Resurrection, is being built on the opposite side of the square.

Even more impressive than the scale of the rebirth and reconstruction is the spiritual quality of the Archbishop’s leadership and the spiritual quality of the life, mission, and witness of the Orthodox Church of Albania. The presence of Christ in the memory of the suffering during the communist era and in the experience of the Church’s resurrection is quietly evident.

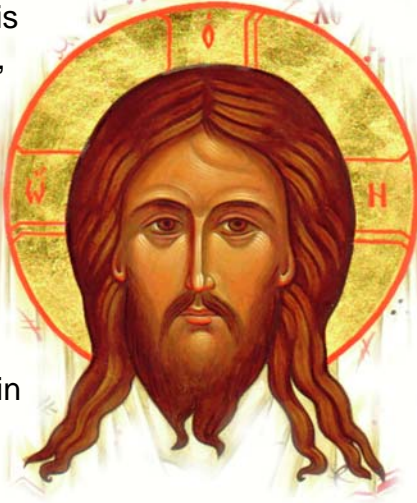
The Orthodox Church of Albania has made a deep spiritual contribution to the peace and cooperation of Christians and Muslims in Albania and in the Balkan region. When the Albanians were fleeing by the hundreds of thousands from Kosovo several years ago, the Orthodox Church provided hospitality – shelter, food, and other forms of assistance – to the refugees, without making any distinctions along religious lines. This meant that the vast majority of refugees offered love and help by the Orthodox Church of Albania were Muslims. The Church of Albania gave a significant monetary contribution towards the building of a mosque in Kosovo, as a sign of love and reconciliation.

It is fitting that the Archbishop whose name means “resurrection” presides in love over a Church that has risen from the dead, and is building a cathedral church named after the Resurrection of Christ.

In a time when Orthodoxy, wherever we turn, is beset by many challenges and difficulties, the light of Christ which shines so brightly in Albania reminds us that the light of Christ illumines all. This means that in every situation of challenge and difficulty we, too, have the vocation to be witnesses to the love of Christ, witnesses to the presence in our midst of the One Who is born for our sake as a little child, witnesses to the joy which Christ shares with us in its fullness. ■

He Who is, becomes. The uncreated is created. He Whom no locality can hold, through the mediation of an intelligent soul, is within the limits of the flesh. He Who enriches others, Himself becomes poor, and because He assumed the poverty of our flesh, we are made rich with His divinity. Fullness empties itself, because He empties Himself of His glory for a time in order that I participate in His fullness.

– St. Gregory Nazianzen



“I Am Who I Am”

Within the halo of every icon of Our Lord Jesus Christ, one finds three Greek Letters: an *O* with a backward comma above, a fat *W*, and an *H*. These letters mean “He Who Is,” the Greek translation of the four Hebrew consonants that mean “I Am Who I Am,” or “I Am ‘He Who Is,’” or simply “I Am” [YHWH]. When the Almighty appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai and was asked His name, this was His answer – a response that has humanity searching to define ever since, aware that the name is indefinable. To define is to limit; God is beyond all limits.

We shall never define God, nor shall we gain entry into God’s essence, His innermost being. Yet out of love for His world, the second person of the Trinity became man. We celebrate this awesome mystery without being able to solve it. Centuries ago, Saint Gregory Palamas explained the way God comes to us by grace, or “energies,” without offering us access to divine essence. That relationship is exclusive to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even beyond this lifetime God as He is in Himself will not be revealed; however, through the exchange between Christ and ourselves it is made real. This is the promise that Saint Gregory of Nazianzen expressed so beautifully in the passage above.

This mystery is proclaimed continually in the Church’s worship. Listen to the poignant embellishment of Psalm 118/119 sung plaintively at the Matins of Great and Holy Friday, as the Church again ponders Christ’s

incarnation, ministry, and crucifixion. As we hold a wake for the crucified Lord of heaven and earth, the Word of God Who was “in the beginning” – that is, before the universe, prior to the angels, earlier than anything that was created – not only was “with God,” but indeed “was God.” And yet “for us men and for our salvation [He] became man... and we have beheld His glory” [John 1].

God enters into the very creation He made. He accepts the limits of humanity, never having been limited by space or time. He permits Himself to take on the confinements of our nature, the “poverty of our flesh,” so that we may become like Him, and thereby become, miracle of miracles, true children of His Father – not in the same manner in which He is the Son of God, but by adoption. He emptied Himself for a time, in order that we may be filled with Him.

We may ask ourselves, or even ask Him, why He would do that for us? Surely not for anything we did to earn that gift of adoption to sonship. Nor was it through some compulsion on God’s part, nor because He needs anything from us other than to return His love with as much love as we humans are capable of, given our natural limitations.

No bequest on earth can equal God’s gift of love to us. Imagine being visited by some billionaire with the offer to make us his sole inheritor. Would we refuse? How much more ought we express our appreciation to Jesus Christ for having brought us the gift of entry beyond death to eternal life. ■

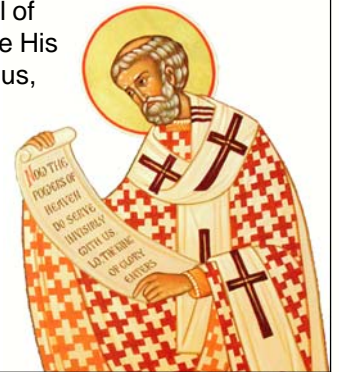
Saint Justin Martyr Formerly He appeared to Moses and to the other prophets in the form of fire or as a bodiless Being; but now, by a Virgin and by the will of the Father, He has become man... for the sake of believing men and for the defeat of the demons.

Saint Athanasius He became man and dwelt bodily in the flesh... In the body He experienced hunger, thirst, suffering, weariness, and the like... He carries our infirmities and He Himself bears our sins, so that it might be revealed that He has become man for the sake of us, and that the body in which He bore our sins is His own body.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem Man abandoned God and fashioned images carved after the human form. Since an image of man was falsely worshipped as God, God became truly man so that the falsehood might be destroyed... The Lord took on our likeness so that He might give us an even greater grace, so that sinful mankind might become a partaker of God.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons You will follow the only true and reliable Teacher, the Word of God, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who, because of His great love, became what we are so that He might bring us to be what He Himself is.

Saint Clement of Rome Who can explain the extent of God’s love? In love the Master took hold of us. Jesus Christ, for the sake of the love which He had for us and by the will of God, gave His blood for us, His flesh for our flesh, and His life for our lives.



Metropolitan Herman

Mission central to Gospel

Metropolitan Herman addresses OCMC banquet

Christ's challenge to proclaim the Good News in word and deed stands at the very heart of the Church's essence and existence. As the late Protospesbyter John Meyendorff wrote, "When the Church ceases to be missionary, the Church ceases to be."

Having been buried and raised with Christ in Holy Baptism, having been sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit in Holy Chrismation, and having entered into a "common union" with the Most Holy Trinity and one another in the Holy Eucharist, we cannot view the great gift of salvation as something for "our people" alone, or as something that we are called to "preserve." On the day of resurrection, the women ran with haste to share that which was revealed by the empty tomb with the disciples. They did not conceal their joy, nor did they keep the good news of the resurrection to themselves. They immediately shared it! Similarly, on the day of Pentecost, Peter boldly proclaimed the Gospel to those who had gathered in Jerusalem. Thousands publicly embraced the risen Christ as a result. The missionary work undertaken from that day forward by the apostles and disciples, whose "proclamation has gone out into all the world" and whose words resounded "to the ends of the universe," was carried on by Saint Nino, the Evangelizer of Georgia; Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Evangelizers of the Slavs; Saint Herman and his seven missionary companions, who planted the Orthodox Faith in North America in 1794; and countless others who, in all places and at all times, have enabled the Church to be what it is called to be – a community of faith and hope, based on the love of God, embracing all nations, all peoples, the entire universe.

Mission involves more than words, more than proclamations, more than preaching. Important as these elements are in the proclamation of the Gospel – and central as they were to the ministry of Christ Himself, Who preached and taught continually during his three years of public ministry – transforming word into action, thereby revealing the love of God for all mankind in tangible, concrete ways, is equally central to "teaching all nations." As Our Lord reveals in Matthew 25, in which we find the well-known parable of the sheep and goats, we ultimately will not be judged on the number of words we have uttered, or on the number of sermons we have preached, or on the number of classes we have organized. Rather, we will be

judged on our desire to recognize the very image of Jesus Christ in those around us. We will be judged on our willingness to discern His divine presence in the "least of the brethren." Herein we discover true mission and true ministry, responding to the Lord Himself by responding to the real needs of His People.

There are those, to be sure, who reduce Christianity to addressing mankind's temporal needs. The "social Gospel" and numerous "peace and justice ministries," while focusing on alleviating human suffering, often fail to recognize mankind's real, and universal, need to discover a new, transformed, and transfigured life in Christ. This is not to say that such ministries are "wrong." However, they are "incomplete." Feeding the hungry involves more than the distribution of food. When Our Lord, for example, fed the 5000, He not only

offered fish and bread; He enabled them to feed on Himself, His divine presence in their otherwise difficult lives. In the same way, the very example of sharing that with which we have been blessed abundantly feeds the soul, as well as the body. Visiting the sick and imprisoned involves more than sharing a pleasant hour or two "cheering up" those thirsting for human contact; it requires bringing the image and very presence of Christ into the lives of those who suffer from spiritual thirst, emptiness, and any number of worldly "imprisonments," thereby revealing the Kingdom not yet fully revealed, but already fully present in the Church. True mission involves not only distributing blankets and school supplies, offering essential health care and social and educational programs, or providing basic shelter and other essentials of this life. True mission involves sharing and revealing the love of the God, Whom Saint John calls "Love" Itself; distributing and offering and providing such things for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of Christ, and for the sake of providing by our actions and personal example a glimpse of the divine. Hence, we feed the hungry, not only to satisfy their physical needs, but also to address their craving for spiritual nourishment. We clothe the naked not only with coats and shoes,

but in the One in Whose very image all of us have been created. We give drink to the thirsty, not only to quench their physical thirst, but as a means of sharing the One Who reveals Himself as the "Living Water," Who quenches the need to encounter the divine and partake of the divine nature itself, as Saint Paul so eloquently writes.

The work of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center – and the ministry of the countless faithful who have made the commitment to short or long-term missionary teams – has always been characterized by the commitment to put our faith into action. Proclaiming the Gospel by living the Gospel – sharing the Good News by personal example and in thanksgiving for the love and blessings we have received – is the essence of mission, of evangelization, of the

Mission to 27



OCMC honors Metropolitan Herman

Metropolitan Herman was presented with an icon of the call of the disciples by the Rev. Martin Ritsi, director of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, and Mr. Cliff Argue, OCMC board president. The presentation was made during a Chicago-area OCMC fundraising banquet at which Metropolitan Herman was keynote speaker on November 10, 2005. Metropolitan Herman also met with OCMC board members and offered words of encouragement as the agency embarks on building its new center in St. Augustine, FL.

The results are in Survey reveals keys to parish growth

In preparation for the 14th All-American Council in Toronto this past summer, parish priests from every diocese in the Orthodox Church in America participated in an online survey on various aspects of parish life. Over 260 priests – 51% of all assigned parish priests – responded to the survey, the results of which were previewed during an AAC plenary session on the theme of evangelization.

The survey delved into parish data, worship and sacraments, education, outreach and evangelization, structure and administration, social and other activities, inter-Orthodox and ecumenical relations, parish practices, and related issues. The survey’s attempted to profile the “typical” characteristics of an OCA parish, to enable parish clergy and leaders to compare their parishes with similar parishes, and to compare growing parishes with respect to parish and parishioner age, frequency of services, frequency of social and educational programs, activity level, challenges, etc.

Accentuating the positive. A number of encouraging signs were revealed by the survey.

- Nearly 56% of the respondents indicated that their parishes were experiencing “good growth” or “fair growth.” Only 4% said their parishes were in “serious decline.”
- Over 82% said their parishes had either “stayed the same” or “gotten younger,” while only 18% said their parishes had “gotten older.”
- 83% reported that English is the exclusive language of liturgical worship, while 14% use other languages in addition to English. Only 3% reported the exclusive use of a language other than English.
- 20% reported that converts made up over 40% of their parishes’ membership. Another 20% reported that the number of converts in their parishes was at least 60% of the membership.

Characteristics of growth. According to the survey, parishes experiencing “good growth” shared several characteristics.

1 The parish is a young one. 72% of the respondents reported that their parishes had “gotten younger” or “stayed the same”

None of the respondents who experienced “good growth” reported that their parishes had “gotten older.”

2 New immigration is affecting growth in some parishes. 52% reported that they were experiencing “a recent influx of immigrants.”

3 Conversions are also playing a role in growth. 26% reported that converts comprised 41–60% of their membership, while 24% reported convert membership of 61–80%. An amazing 18% noted that over 80% of their memberships are made up of converts.

4 A fuller liturgical life is another hallmark of a growing parish. 76% of those reporting “good growth” said that in addition to the Sunday Liturgy, three or more additional services are celebrated weekly.

5 Participation in the parish’s liturgical, sacramental, and social life also affects growth. “Good growth” parishes have a higher percentage of parishioners attending services, participating in Holy Communion and Confession, and attending at least one week-day social activity.

6 “Good growth” parishes focus on things that produce growth. 53% reported focusing on parish ministries, 18% on parish membership growth, and 16% on strategic planning.

7 Growing parishes face different challenges than parishes faced a generation ago. 28% are concerned about the parish’s future direction, 27% about money, and 19% about ongoing growth.

8 Curiously, education did not play a significant role in parish growth. Nearly half the parishes reporting “good growth” – 46% – said that less than 20% of their members attend adult education programs. Only 10% of parishes in this category, most of them rather small, reported that more than 60% of their adults attend such programs.

9 Personal contact is the key to growth. Finally, of all the “techniques,” methods, and attempts to make parishes known in the community [web sites, ads, newspaper articles, radio announcements, etc.] 80% of growing parishes – and 73% of all parishes, regardless of growth rates – reported that new members and converts came to the Church because they heard about it or were invited to the parish by friends. [This calls into question the value of some of the aforementioned “methods” that can produce visibility while generating little growth in reality.] ■



Common ground

Parishes reporting “good growth” were remarkably similar in one area: the designation of what constituted their greatest strengths as well as their greatest weaknesses.

	Strength	Weakness
Worship	92%	8%
Fellowship/friendliness of parish	90%	10%
Pastoral/lay visits in parish	67%	33%
Strategic Planning	56%	44%
Pastoral/lay visits in the neighborhood/community	37%	63%

For complete survey results visit <http://freeonlinesurveys.com/viewresults.asp?surveyid=82807&rn=0.6449941>

80% of growing parishes – and 73% of all parishes, regardless of growth rates – reported that new members and converts came to the Church because they heard about it or were invited to the parish by friends. [This calls into question the value of some of the aforementioned “methods” that can produce visibility while generating little growth in reality.] ■

Father John Behr

Approaching the Nativity

Just what are we celebrating *today*?

Besides fasting and examining ourselves before going to confession, part of our preparation for the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Savior should be to reflect again on what it is that we will be celebrating. We speak so readily of the Son of God being born from the Virgin that we often forget how it is that we affirm this, and overlook the full significance of the liturgical *today* – “Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem” [Nativity Matins].

Whenever we approach any aspect of the mystery of Christ, we must always remember that our way into the mystery is through the Passion – the crucifixion, resurrection, elevation in glory, and bestowal of the Spirit. With the exception of Peter’s confession on the road to Caesarea Philippi before the Passion (the exception which proves the rule, for he then reveals his ignorance about Christ by trying to prevent Him going to Jerusalem to suffer, so receiving the harsh words, “get behind me Satan!”), the disciples were unable to answer those who asked, “Is this not the son of Joseph?” In fact, whatever they had heard about His birth, whatever they had heard themselves from His lips, or whatever miracles they had seen Him work, even seeing Him transfigured in glory, in the first three Gospels they fall away from Him at the time of His Passion, even denying him like Peter. It is not the Cross itself, nor the empty tomb (which is ambiguous, causing anxiety until the angel explains what had happened), nor even the resurrectional appearances (for they did not recognize Him), that finally persuades them as to Who Christ is. Only when He begins to open the Scriptures to show how they all speak of how it was necessary that He should suffer these things before going to His glory – only then do their hearts start to burn, so that they are ready to recognize Him in the breaking of bread, at which point He disappears from their sight.

Perhaps now we are ready to be led into a deeper understanding of the feast of the Nativity. The presence of the saving Passion in the Nativity is already intimated by the wise men bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh – appropriate for a dead Lord, Whose birth is now being celebrated. This theological reflection is carried further by the icon for the feast, which is striking precisely because it does *not* attempt to represent what we read in the Gospels of Matthew or Luke. Instead we have a portrayal of Christ’s birth told in terms of His Passion. He already has a Cross in His halo. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, as a corpse. He is placed in a manger, to be eaten, which is depicted as an altar or as a coffin. And He is placed in a cave, whose shape is completed by the Virgin, just as the crucified Christ was placed in a new-hewn tomb, in which no man had ever

been lain (that is, a virgin tomb), belonging to Joseph. The same point could be made by looking at the hymnography for the feast, especially for the days leading to the feast, which is explicitly modeled on the hymnography for Holy Week. “To the tomb corresponds the womb,” as the Fathers said.

Perhaps now we are also ready to appreciate anew why it is that we celebrate the feast of the Nativity on December 25. The Nativity of Christ began to be celebrated in the East only in the late fourth century, and thereafter it is explained in terms of solar symbolism, as a replacement of the pagan feast of the birth of the invincible sun. But, before any such considerations arose, the feast was celebrated in the West, where the date of the 25th of December

was based on the date of the Passion, for this was reckoned to have occurred, nine months earlier, on twenty-fifth of March (the Julian calendar equivalent of the fourteenth of Nissan). So in the liturgical calendar, the Passion of Christ was followed, nine months later, by the birth of Christ. Only subsequently was this date, counting now backwards from the Nativity, reckoned to be the date of the Annunciation.

Finally, perhaps, now that we have seen something of how it is that we speak of the birth of the Son of God from the Virgin, we will also be able to see the breadth of this mystery. We, who now stand in the light of Christ’s Passion, confessing that He is indeed the Son of God, born of the Virgin, are in the position of the beloved disciple in the Gospel of John, standing by the foot of the Cross, hearing

the words of Christ: “Woman behold your son; son behold your mother.” The first Christians spoke beautifully and boldly of the Church as their mother, their virgin mother, in whom they were born again, putting on the identity of Christ. “I am in travail,” Paul says to those who received his words, “until Christ be formed in you.”

Let us, then, bear all these dimensions of the Nativity of Christ in mind as we prepare ourselves for this feast, knowing that, as the body of Christ, it involves us too in the most immediate way possible – *today!* ■

Fr. Behr is a faculty member at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Crestwood, NY.

Father Steven Kostoff

Acts of God?

Looking back at Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina proved to be one of the worst natural disasters in contemporary history. The devastation reached biblical proportions. As sunny skies returned over New Orleans and Mississippi, the enormity of the loss and the colossal proportions of the clean-up were revealed. Countless lives were lost; count-



The Nativity icon reveals Our Savior’s Passion, as well as His birth.

InSites

less others were ruined. To what are the refugees to return? With homes, jobs, and livelihoods blown or swept away, “normal life” no longer exists.

Human nature being what it is, we initially sympathized and empathized to a degree; but now, many weeks later, we have returned to our own lives, to those things to be accomplished today and tomorrow. We argue over the same petty things as we did yesterday. We complain about rising gas prices, politics, the weather, whatever. Yet we are convinced that we learned the importance of appreciating the people in our lives and the things around us as we witnessed others stripped of them in the rising flood waters. This is all perhaps inevitable as the world does not – and cannot – stop because of a local disaster, enormous though it may be. With the built-in instinct for survival that characterizes human beings, we inwardly sigh in relief that it was “someone else,” and not me.

On the other hand, we witnessed countless acts of heroism, sacrifice, and selflessness in the months after Katrina. As a society, we do an impressive history of “coming together” in the face of disaster, with anonymous volunteers putting in days of physically and emotionally draining work to speed the process that will return coastal cities and towns to a liveable condition. Millions of dollars, food, water, and clothing continue to be donated and distributed. Compassion, sacrifice, and selflessness have not been in short supply.

Natural disasters are often called “acts of God.” While Orthodox Christians believe that God is indeed engaged with His creation, an “act of God” remains a very ambiguous, if not misleading, term. We do not believe that Katrina was directly willed by God for some punitive or didactic purpose. Were the people of Gulf Coast, Indonesia, or Mexico any more sinful than the rest of us? Were they being made an example to put the fear of God into us? Our theological reflection should not lead us into such murky speculation, unworthy of the God we love and adore. In an article titled “Tsunami and Theodicy,” Orthodox theologian David Hart wrote, “I do not believe we Christians are obliged – or even allowed – to look upon the devastation visited upon the coasts of the Indian Ocean and to console ourselves with the vacuous cant about the mysterious course taken by God’s goodness in this world, or to assure others that some ultimate meaning or purpose resides in so much misery. Ours is, after all, a religion of salvation; our faith is in a God Who has come to rescue His creation from the absurdity of sin and the emptiness of death, and so we are permitted to hate these things with



Godly acts! The OCA's Fr. David Garrettson, ROCOR's Fr. Alexander Logunov, and ACROD's Fr. David Kossey helping Katrina victims.

a perfect hatred....”

Christ has already won the victory over evil and death, but we acknowledge that the fulfillment of His victory – the wiping away of all sickness, sorrow, and sighing – has not yet been fully achieved. Creation remains in groaning until the full revelation of the Kingdom. Again, as David Hart writes, “Until then, the world remains a place of struggle between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death; and, in such a world, our portion is charity.”

A pious and sigh-filled resignation in the face of natural disaster – as well as accidents, illness, war, terrorist attacks – does not make our response any more “Christian” than the next. We need much more to feel the sting of such events, and even the grief and anger that accompany that awareness. Human loss, suffering, and death are the enemies that God has overcome on our behalf through Christ. In the end, they will lose their grip over our lives. And then God will be all in all. To once more refer to a passing comment by David Hart that strikes me as very insightful, “Faith... has set us free from optimism, and taught us hope instead.” And hope comes from God, and will lead us to God. ■

Fr. Kostoff is rector of Christ the Savior/Holy Spirit Church, Cincinnati, OH.

Mary Ann Bulko

The malling of religion

Thoughts on America’s “House of Worship”

Recently, my sister and I met for lunch at the mall. I hadn’t been there in some time. The complex’s growth, combined with the huge number of people scurrying about, left me perplexed. I thought about the decreasing number of persons who attend the Divine Liturgy in many of our parishes, and the even smaller handful of souls who participate in Vespers or festal services. Yet, attendance is up at the mall, especially as the holidays approach.

In a sense, the mall might be equated to a church. Some try to get there early, before the doors open, to take advantage of a good sale – not unlike those who arrive well before the Liturgy begins to secure their “favorite spot.”

On this particular visit to the mall, shoppers were preparing for a “great feast” – Halloween – claimed by some to be

America’s second most popular family celebration. Now, while I have nothing against children getting treats and innocently dressing up for some fun, but is it really necessary to have an entire store devoted exclusively to costumes, masks, and props? Of course, in the Church we have those who vest in special garb, but beyond that, there is no comparison. It’s one thing to see children – and even adults – dressed in costumes, but quite another matter to witness our spiritual shepherds vested in the white baptismal garment and the

Mall to 18



“O come, all ye somewhat faithful”
A new “House of Worship?”

Hard copy: TOC back in print in 2006

Reader feedback to the posting of *The Orthodox Church* on the OCA web site was reviewed at a recent meeting of members of the Office of Communications and the OCA chancery staff.

The response to posting TOC in PDF format on the site was universally positive, but the vast majority of those reacting to the decision voiced strong opinions concerning the need to continue publishing TOC, since many faithful do not have internet access. Consequently, it was decided that in 2006, six bi-monthly issues will be published and mailed free of charge to all registered members of OCA parishes.

It was also decided to adopt a 32-page news magazine format instead of the oversized tabloid format used since TOC made its debut four decades ago.

Sharp, unanticipated increases in paper and production costs and the increase in postage rates, slated to go into effect in the second week of January 2006, have had an impact on TOC.

In an effort to reduce unnecessary printing, production, and mailing expenses, it also was decided that

- while reported parish members – that is, those included in a parish's reported "fair share" statistics – will continue to receive TOC free of charge, subscription rates for non-parish members will be increased for the first time in 16 years from \$15.00 to \$30.00.
- all complimentary "outreach subscriptions" to non-parish members and enquirers will be eliminated, although gratis copies will still be sent to the sister Orthodox Churches abroad, hierarchs, seminary libraries, institutions, and Church organizations. In some instances, parishes reporting memberships of 50 or 100 souls were requesting two or three hundred unpaid subscriptions for visitors and potential members or for local outreach efforts. Eliminating "outreach subscriptions" will reduce the total press run by an estimated 2000 copies per issue. Those non-parish members interested in receiving TOC will be invited to subscribe."
- the Department of Pastoral Life and Ministry's newsletter, *Pastors to Pastors*, will be incorporated into future issues of TOC, as will selected articles from the OCA's popular *Resource Handbook for Lay Ministry*.

Parish rosters will be reviewed to ensure that current membership records are on file and up-to-date.

TOC to 14

Nativity Message of Metropolitan Herman

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

"All the angels in heaven are of good cheer and greatly rejoice today! The whole creation leaps with joy, for the Savior and Lord is born in Bethlehem! Every error of idolatry has ceased, and Christ reigns unto all ages!" [*Nativity Litiya*].

As we celebrate the birth of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, we join our voices with those of the angels in praising the One Who took on our human nature in order to renew us and all creation, that we might become "partakers of His divine nature, as Saint Paul reminds us. This is indeed a reason to be "of good cheer" and to "greatly rejoice!"

Yet the world in which we live so often fails to delight in this wonder, this unspeakable joy. Too often, the very mention of Christ and His birth is often surrounded with controversy. There are those who would reduce the pivotal event in mankind's history to one of many "holidays" to be privately and quietly observed, but never proclaimed. While "Christ reigns unto all ages," the idolatry which His incarnation erased continues to exist, challenging those who see Him as "the Wonderful Counselor, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" to be all the more fervent in proclaiming that "God is with us" not only with their words, but most importantly, by their actions and deeds.

The ministry of Christ was hardly a private one. He preached to vast throngs of people. He healed the sick in the presence of many. He revealed the fullness of truth to all who would listen and accept His invitation to "come and see." The message of repentance and forgiveness revealed in His parables and miracles was sealed by the very blood He shed in His very public passion and death. His resurrection, announced to thousands in Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost and to the whole world in the days that followed, opened the doors to a greater reality – eternal life in the Kingdom.

We recall the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "He came unto His own, yet His own knew Him not." The Gospel Christ proclaimed was – and still is – surrounded in controversy, precisely because it challenges the "error of idolatry" that insists that this world, and not the world to come, offers all that is necessary, all that is real, all that man needs to attain "fulfillment" and "self actualization." The earthly cares Christ challenges us to lay aside – beginning with the idolatrous desire to see ourselves rather than God as the center of all things – remain obstacles to discerning His will, to sharing His life, and to partaking of His divine nature.

In today's world, so burdened with wars, natural disasters, "political correctness," and an overall lack of loving-kindness, it is easy to succumb to temptation and doubt, to focus on earthly cares rather than heavenly delights. The incarnation invites us to look beyond these burdens, to recognize that while we still live in a fallen world, the victorious Kingdom yet to come is already fully present to us in the Church, if only we respond to Christ's call: "Come... and I will give you rest." It is in this light that all the angels of heaven are of good cheer as they announce to mankind that freedom from selfishness and isolation from its Creator has been lovingly granted to all who, fleeing the idolatry of this life, freely seek and accept the gift of eternal life discovered in the fullness of Bethlehem's cave and, at the same time, in the emptiness of Jerusalem's tomb.

It is my prayer that this year's celebration of the Nativity will be filled with the joy that comes when we truly repent, when we truly strive to lay aside the world's idols and passing concerns, when we discern that Christ indeed "reigns unto all ages." May we, now and in the year to come, flee from the temptation to bear our burdens without Him. Let us recommit ourselves to embracing His very presence in our midst with renewed zeal and conviction, striving to become the "light of the world" He calls us to be.

With love in the Newborn Lord,


+ HERMAN

Archbishop of Washington and New York
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

OCA News Notes Notices



Metropolitan Herman opens Holy Synod session with Service of Thanksgiving before the wonderworking Sitka Icon of the Mother of God.

Holy Synod holds fall session

Bishop Nikon elected to vacant New England see

Syosset, NY/ OCA Communications

In response to the request of delegates to a July 2005 extraordinary assembly of the Diocese of New England to provide a ruling bishop for the diocese, members of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America elected His Grace, Bishop Nikon of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese to fill the diocesan vacancy at their fall session at the OCA chancery here October 18-20, 2005.

Delegates to the extraordinary assembly failed to nominate a candidate to fill the diocesan see, which had been vacant since the transfer of Bishop [now Archbishop] Job to the Diocese of the Midwest in the early 1990s. Of the 58 voting delegates, 25 had abstained, while the remaining ballots were cast for five different candidates, none of whom garnered the required two-thirds majority. The delegates then passed a resolution calling for the Holy Synod of Bishops to elect a ruling hierarch for the diocese “in the best interests of the diocese and the whole Church.”

As ruling bishop of the Albanian Archdiocese, Bishop Nikon was not eligible for

nomination by the assembly, but was eligible for election by the Holy Synod.

Bishop Nikon will bear the title of Bishop of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese.

The Holy Synod’s fall session opened on Tuesday, October 18, with the celebration of a Service of Thanksgiving in the presence of the wonderworking Sitka Icon of the Mother of God in Saint Sergius of Radonezh Chapel.

“We have just offered prayers of supplication, asking God’s blessing and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the presence of the wonderworking Sitka Icon of the Mother of God,” Metropolitan Herman said in his opening address. “This icon, a true spiritual treasure,

reminds us that from the earliest days of the Church in North America and from the very beginning of its mission, the Mother of God’s presence in the life of our Church and her motherly intercession on our behalf, have played an integral and essential role in its life and mission.”

Metropolitan Herman went on to report on a variety of matters, including the OCA’s relationship with various Orthodox Sister Churches, the current activities of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, and the work of the chancery and the Church’s departments, offices, and boards. He reported on the recent visit to the OCA of His Eminence, Archbishop Leo of Karelia and All Finland and the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska. He noted that in the face of a drop in free-will offerings – a phenomenon shared by other Orthodox Churches, religious bodies, and not-for-profits in North America – the OCA’s 2006 budget had been reduced by \$250,000.00. The reduction reflects a cutback in chancery personnel and in the elimination of expenditures related to various projects and publications. He spoke positively about the renewed efforts of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards under its new executive director, the Very Rev. Eugene Vansuch.

Financial concerns were also expressed in reports given by Protopresbyter Robert

Kondratik, chancellor; the Very Rev. Paul Kucynda, acting treasurer; and the Very Rev. Stavros Strikis, comptroller. The hierarchs accepted the 2006 budget and approved it for review and implementation by the Metropolitan Council. [See related article on page 13.] The hierarchs supported the decision of the 14th All-American Council

in July 2005 for further implementation of the “Fair Share” program, which includes the appointment of a full-time development director by Metropolitan Herman.

Synod to 12



Bishop Nikon receives blessing from Metropolitan Herman after election to vacant New England see.

Synod from 11

They also analyzed statistics detailing the level of support offered by individual parishes for the OCA's annual charity, seminary, and mission appeals.

The hierarchs reviewed the work of the 14th All-American Council. They accepted the report of the Council summary team for implementing specific goals during the next three to six months, three years, and five to ten years respectively. In response to the interest in evangelization, education, and unity expressed by delegates, the hierarchs decided to look into ways to coordinate evangelistic efforts and address the goal of establishing 50 new communities and revitalizing 50 older parishes in the next decade. They approved numerous appointments to the OCA's departments, offices, boards, and commissions.

In the area of external affairs and inter-Church relations, it was reported that Orthodox participation in the National Council of Churches in Christ will be discussed at the SCOPA meeting in November 2005.

The hierarchs also heard a report on the recent work of International Orthodox Christian Charities [IOCC] by Mr. Dean Triantafilou, especially in addressing the needs of Hurricane Katrina victims. They applauded IOCC's growing efforts on behalf of North America's Orthodox Christians by presenting Mr. Triantafilou with a citation signed by the hierarchs.

In other episcopal matters, His Eminence, Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania and the Bulgarian Diocese and His Eminence, Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest were appointed to the Lesser Synod of Bishops for 2005-2008. His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania was appointed to the Lesser Synod for 2005-2006. His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada was

appointed to the Lesser Synod for 2006-2007, while Bishop Nikon was appointed to serve for 2007-2008. Bishop Seraphim also was appointed secretary of the Holy Synod and chairman of the Department of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, for which His Grace, Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, Anchorage, and Alaska was appointed vice-chairman.

In other appointments, Archbishop Kyrill was named to chair the Board of Theological Education, with Bishops Seraphim, Nikolai, and Tikhon of Philadelphia serving as board members. His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South was appointed chairman of the Committee on Late Vocations, with His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate and His Grace, Bishop Alejo of Mexico City serving as committee members. His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West was appointed chairman of the Committee on Canons and Statutes.

Further episcopal appoints were made. Chairing the Pension Board is Bishop Nikon. Archbishop Nathaniel was appointed chairman of the Canonization Commission, with Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia serving as vice-chairman and His Grace, Bishop Irineu of Dearborn Heights as commission member. Bishop Nikolai will chair the newly-created Clergy Awards Commission and the Commission on Church Demographics, assisted by Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and His Grace, Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley. Archbishop Job will chair the Commission on the All-American Council.

The Holy Synod of Bishops meets two times each year, in the spring and fall. The Holy Synod's next spring session will be held May 23- 25, 2006 at the OCA chancery in Syosset, NY. ■

Condolences sent after Jordanian terrorist attack

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, sent condolences to His Majesty, King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and to His Excellency, Karim Kawar, Ambassador, after learning of the terrorist attacks at three hotels in Amman, Jordan on Wednesday, November 9, 2005.

Many of those who lost their lives in the attack were Orthodox Christians.

"It is with deep sadness that news of the tragic events perpetrated against the people of Jordan was reported here in the United States," Metropolitan Herman wrote. "On behalf of the hierarchs, clergy, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, please accept our deepest condolences for you and the people of Jordan on the horrific and brutal terrorist attacks in Amman.

"Although we live in a world that is presently in the grip of violence and terror, we also live in a world in which people, such as you and your late father, King Hussein, have been steady examples of peace and reconciliation," the letter said. "Please be assured of my continued prayers for you and the people of Jordan during these most painful days. May God continue to inspire you to lead your people with wisdom, courage and prudence as you respond to these evil deeds, which ultimately will end in failure." ■

Prayers offered for ailing Metropolitan Philip

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, assured assured His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America of his prayers and those the OCA's faithful in a letter dated October 20, 2005.

One week earlier, Metropolitan Philip had been hospitalized, but doctors have been pleased with his progress to date.

"Please accept this sincere expression of the concern and sincere best wishes of the Holy Synod of Bishops as well as those of all the hierarchs, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America as you continue your recuperation," Metropolitan Herman wrote. "Be assured of our prayers, that the Lord will restore Your Eminence to full health and strength so that you may quickly return to the exercise of the archpastoral responsibilities with which He has entrusted you." ■

Holy Synod with IOCC's Dean Triantafilou, who received a synodal citation for his efforts in the field of humanitarian aid on behalf of N. America's Orthodox Christians.



Syosset, NY/ OCA Communications

Members of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America reviewed in detail the 14th All-American Council held in Toronto, ON, Canada in July 2005 during their meeting at the OCA Chancery here Wednesday, November 9, 2005.

The All-American Council addressed a number of issues facing the Church, with particular emphasis on evangelization and mission efforts, ongoing educational opportunities for parish clergy, and finances.

The decision of the Holy Synod of Bishops to change the periodicity for convening All-American Councils from three to five years was also reported. Hence, the 15th All-American Council will be held in 2010. It is hoped that pastoral life, parish life, and youth and young adult conferences will be scheduled in the intervening years.

Metropolitan Council members also reviewed the financial status of the Church in depth.

In his report to the Metropolitan Council, the Very Rev. Paul Kucynda, acting treasurer, expressed his hope that the executive director of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards, the Very Rev. Eugene Vansuch, and the newly-appointed director of development, the Very Rev. John Dresko, will be effective in their work and will meet with a generous response.

Father Kucynda added that it is imperative for the Church to follow sound financial practices to avoid questions concerning accountability.

Father Dresko, rector of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT and long-time chairman of the OCA Department of Stewardship, will begin his duties as director of development on January 1, 2006. He stated that he looks forward to beginning his responsibilities and accepting the challenges his new duties will bring. He added that the Metropolitan Council is essential in successful fundraising and encouraged its members to exercise leadership in this important area of Church life.

Father Vansuch updated council members



FOS exec director
Fr. Eugene Vansuch reports on need for increased free-will giving.

Metropolitan Council reviews 14th AAC, OCA finances

2006 budget unanimously passed



Metropolitan Council members *listen to address of Metropolitan Herman.*

on his recent parish visits and ongoing efforts in expanding the work of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards. He noted that 156 parishes presently support FOS at various levels. Mr. David Lucs, assistant to the chancellor for communications and special appeals, reported on the response to the 2005 special appeals.

The proposed 2006 budget, previously approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops, was presented to the Metropolitan Council members and, upon Father Kondratik's suggestion, was reviewed line-by-line. The Very Rev. Stavros Strikis, OCA comptroller, responded to several questions, noting that the budget as presented had been revised four times and had been reviewed by five different bodies, including the Office of the Treasurer, the Administrative Committee, a working group comprised of Metropolitan Council members that met

on September 12, 2005, the Holy Synod of Bishops, and the Metropolitan Council.

After a thorough review, Metropolitan Council members unanimously adopted the 2006 budget.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, addressed numerous concerns that arose in response to information and statements circulated in recent weeks, primarily on the internet. Emphasizing that all financial matters are his responsibility, Metropolitan Herman informed council members that he plans to order independent audits by an outside CPA firm licensed within the State of New York. He further reported that the results of the independent audits will be made available to the Church at large.

"Our love and concern must be for the Church," Metropolitan Herman stated, adding that recent allegations, especially those circulated on the internet, are 'not for the good of the Church.'

In response to questions about earmarked donations, Father Strikis noted that such contributions are used as specified by the donors.

With regard to the indebtedness reported by the Very Rev. Dimitri Oselinsky, former

Met Council to 14

Met Council from 13

Metropolitan Council meets

OCA treasurer, at the 14th All-American Council, Metropolitan Herman stated that the correct process in this regard is to assume a loan that will eliminate the entire debt, thereby consolidating payments. Affirming that he and the members of the Holy Synod take this matter "very seriously," he assured Metropolitan Council members that the issue is being addressed in a responsible manner.

Costs associated with the printing, production, and mailing of *The Orthodox Church* newspaper were also reviewed, and it was reported that less expensive printing options were being explored, especially in light of increasing printing costs and the anticipated increase in postal rates due to go into effect in January 2006. Two issues of TOC – August/September/October and November/December – are being distributed on the OCA web site during this period of review.

Questions were also fielded concerning expenses related to Saint Catherine Representation Church in Moscow, the Department of Christian Education, the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations, the Seminary Internship program, and other budgeted items. An open and fruitful discussion concerning the financial needs of parishes, dioceses, and the central Church administration ensued.

Before moving on to other matters, Metropolitan Council members unanimously affirmed the following statement issued by Metropolitan Herman.

"The Fourteenth All-American Council had an impact on us in a variety of ways," Metropolitan Herman's statement began. "I appreciate the clarity with which those gathered for the Council identified specific issues, concerns, and priorities. Theological education, on-going clergy formation, religious education of adults and children, addressing the issue of parish health in all parishes and missions of the Church, are just a few worthy of note.

"Today's treasurer's report included the fact that we presently face a significant indebtedness that cannot be ignored," Metropolitan Herman continued. "This matter was also discussed at the recent meeting of the Holy Synod. In acknowledging that this issue must be addressed forthrightly and accountably and, with the full consensus and support of the Metropolitan Council, I have asked Father Paul Kucynda, as acting trea-

surer, to arrange for a full and complete independent audit of our financial records. Also, beginning January 1, 2006, the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America will employ 'Best Practices' for non-profit organizations. I believe that this decision will serve us well in both the present and the future."

Metropolitan Council members also adopted a resolution calling for a means of consolidating all debts under the direction of the Office of the Treasurer, and considered a variety of other matters, including

- the Church Planting Grant program. Council members reviewed the list of missions participating in the Planting Grant program. It was reported that, if the 2006 Missions Appeal raises more than \$120,000.00, a sixth mission will receive a grant.

- Pension benefits. The Very Rev. Michael Westerberg and Mrs. Elizabeth Kondratik presented a report on the proposal to amend the provisions of the pension plan. This proposal adds to the benefits, with some increased expense to parishes and participants. Father Westerberg noted that this represents a modest increase in cost, but a large increase in benefits.

Simply stated, the pension plan would be amended to include housing allowance in the monthly pension fund contributions, thereby increasing pension benefits. Council members voted to accept the new benefit plan as presented. Further information concerning the new provisions will be sent to all participants in the pension plan and to all clergy and parishes in the near future.

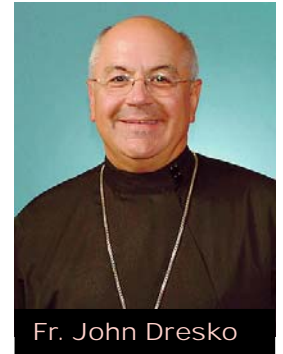
Chaired by the Primate of the Church, the Metropolitan Council is composed of clergy and lay representatives elected by the OCA's dioceses, as well as representatives at large elected by the All-American Council. Members of the central Church administration are also members of the Council.

In addition to Metropolitan Herman and others mentioned above, those attending the meeting included the Very Rev. David Brum, recording secretary; Archimandrite Isidore [Brittain]; the Very Revs. Vladimir Berzonsky, Theodore Boback, Sergei Bouteneff, George Hasenecz, John Onofrey, Philip Reese, Gregory Safchuk, Matthew Tate, John Tkachuk, Michael Westerberg, and Constantine White; and Daniel Crosby, Prof. John Erickson, Robert Kornafel, Dorothy Nowik, Gary Popovich, Richard Schneider, Dr. John Schultz, Dr. Faith Skordinski; Dr. Richard West, and Dr. Alice Woog. ■

Fr. Dresko named OCA development director

Syosset, NY/ OCA Communications

The Very Rev. John Dresko, rector of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, was recently appointed director of development for the Orthodox Church in America.



Fr. John Dresko

The need for a development director had been discussed by members of the Holy Synod of Bishops for some time. The position involves encouraging increased giving to the work of the Church and will compliment the work being done by the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards under the direction of the Very Rev. Eugene Vansuch.

For many years, Father Dresko has served as chairman of the OCA Department of Stewardship. He has conducted numerous workshops and seminars on financial stewardship and was instrumental in drafting the current "fair share" system. He is widely knowledgeable on every aspect of financial planning, grants, will and bequests, and related areas.

Father Dresko assumes his new position on January 1, 2006. ■

TOC from 10

Hard copy: TOC back in print for 2006

"We hope to resolve discrepancies between reported parish membership and TOC subscriptions," said the Very Rev. John Matusiak, communications director. "A parish reporting 100 members for the OCA 'fair share' should not be submitting a subscription list of two or three hundred or more addresses, for example."

Future printed editions of TOC also will be posted to the web site in PDF format.

Also participating in the meeting were Protospesbyter Robert S. Kondratik; the Very Revs. Leonid Kishkovsky, Joseph Fester, Stavros Strikis, and Eugene Vansuch; Messrs. David Lucs, John Mindala, and Gregory Sulich; and Mrs. Lydia Ludemann. ■



Bishop Tikhon with Metropolitan Herman, Bishop Seraphim, and concelebrating clergy from across the Diocese of Eastern PA after the installation Divine Liturgy at Philadelphia's St. Stephen Cathedral.

A new hierarch for Eastern PA

Bishop Tikhon installed as Bishop of Philadelphia

Philadelphia/ OCA Communications

Saint Stephen Cathedral here was filled to capacity as His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman presided at the Divine Liturgy during which His Grace, Bishop Tikhon [Mollard], was officially installed as the ruling hierarch of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania on Saturday, October 29, 2005.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Herman was His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada and numerous clergy representing the diocese's three deaneries.

Metropolitan Herman had served as the diocese's ruling bishop for two decades before his election as the OCA's Primate in July 2002.

"Bishop Tikhon was elected to ruling hierarch of the diocese by clergy and lay delegates at a special assembly of the diocese held in May 2005," said the Very Rev. John Matusiak, OCA Communications Director. "He will oversee nearly 50 parishes across the eastern half of the state."

Protopresbyter Robert Kondratik, OCA chancellor, read the proclamation of installation at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy,

after which Metropolitan Herman presented Bishop Tikhon with the archpastoral staff, signifying his episcopal office.

Following the Divine Liturgy, hundreds of diocesan faithful attended an installation banquet at the Phylmont Country Club, Huntingdon Valley, PA. The Very Rev. John Kowalczyk, diocesan chancellor, opened the festivities with a toast in Bishop Tikhon's honor. Bishop Tikhon was presented with numerous gifts, including new sets of vestments, from the deaneries, clergy, and faithful of the diocese.

A native of Boston, Bishop Tikhon converted to Orthodox Christianity from Episcopalianism in 1989. After completing studies at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA, he entered Saint Tikhon Orthodox Theological Seminary, South Canaan, PA, from which he received a Master of Divinity degree in 1993.

Prior to his consecration to the episcopacy in 2004, Bishop Tikhon was senior lecturer in Old Testament at Saint Tikhon Seminary, and is credited with a number of publications. He also served as deputy abbot of Saint Tikhon Monastery prior to his election to the Philadelphia see. ■

Bishop Nikon 's installation set for mid-December

Boston, MA/ OCA Communications

As this issue of *The Orthodox Church* was being completed, final plans for the installation of His Grace, Bishop Nikon as Bishop of the Diocese of New England were being made. The installation will take place at Boston's Holy Trinity Cathedral December 16-18-2005.

Bishop Nikon was elected to fill the New England Diocese's vacant episcopal see by the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops during their fall session at the OCA chancery December 19, 2005. Bishop Nikon will bear the title of Bishop of Boston and New England and the Albanian Archdiocese.

The installation weekend will open on Friday, December 16 with the celebration of Vespers at the cathedral at 6:00 p.m.

On Saturday, December 17, the installation Liturgy will begin with the greeting of the hierarchs at 9:00 a.m. A reception will follow in the cathedral's D'Arbeloff Hall.

At 1:30 p.m. a banquet honoring Bishop Nikon will be held at the Elements Cafe

On Sunday, December 18, Bishop Nikon will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the cathedral at 9:00 a.m.

Information on banquet reservations, program book listings, and hotels is available on Holy Trinity Cathedral's web site at www.holytrinityorthodox.org. ■

Bishop Nikon of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Archdiocese.





Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland distributes Christmas stockings donated last year by OCA parishes to needy children.

Annual stocking drive in full swing

Syosset, NY/ OCA Communications

Youth groups, Church school classes, parish organizations, and numerous individuals have been busy this fall raising funds to provide Christmas gifts to needy children abroad in response to the Orthodox Church in America's 2005 Christmas Stocking Project.

"Over 100,000 stockings and other Christmas gifts have been distributed since the annual drive was initiated 12 years ago by the OCA Office of Humanitarian Aid," said Mrs. Arlene Kallaur, project coordinator. "The project has helped to brighten the celebration of the Nativity for countless children and orphans in Albania, Belarus, the Georgian Republic, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and a number of Alaskan villages."

In addition to sending gifts to children in these regions, children displaced by Hurricane Katrina also appear on this year's gift list, Mrs. Kallaur added.

"In 2004, we reached our goal of distributing 18,000 filled stockings or equivalent gifts," Mrs. Kallaur said. "The 2005 goal remains the same."

Each stocking or equivalent gift costs \$5.00 – a slight but necessary increase over last year's costs. The stockings once again are being assembled by workers at Long Island's Cerebral Palsy Center before being shipped to their destinations. ■

Metropolitan Herman speaks at DC ceremony in remembrance of Katrina victims

Washington, DC/ OCA Communications

The National Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul here was filled to capacity on Friday, September 16, 2005 as His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman and dozens of other national religious leaders joined US President George Bush in remembering those who had lost their lives as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

One week earlier, US President George W. Bush called upon Americans to set aside the day as one of prayer and remembrance.

Metropolitan Herman was called upon to address the importance of leadership in the face of crisis. He joined several other religious leaders, including Roman Catholic Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes of New Orleans and others representing faith communities in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, in reflecting on the tragedy.

In his remarks at the end of the ceremony, President Bush called upon the nation to remember the departed and the suffering by

asking the Lord to comfort the afflicted and embrace the departed.

International Orthodox Christian Charities [IOCC] continues to provide on-site assistance and ministry to flood victims across the south. Immediately after the hurricane, IOCC dispatched teams to the region to assess needs. ■



President Bush and Vice-President Cheney and their wives acknowledge Metropolitan Herman after DC ceremony.

Metropolitan Herman attends Greek Orthodox gathering honoring Mikhail Gorbachev

New York, NY/ OCA Communications

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, attended an October 22 reception here hosted by the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at which Nobel Peace Prize Laureate President Mikhail Gorbachev received the Athenagoras Humanitarian Award.

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America presented the award.

Established in 1986 in honor of Patriarch Athenagoras, who served as Archbishop of the Americas for 18 years before being elected Ecumenical Patriarch in 1948. Pre-



Metropolitan Herman with former Soviet President Gorbachev and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios.

vious recipients have included Archbishop Iakovos, President Jimmy Carter, President George H.W. Bush, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa, and Elie Wiesel. ■

Sitka Icon's pilgrimage draws to close

Tens of thousands of faithful venerate icon

Over six dozen churches were filled to capacity between September 7 and November 17, 2005 as the wonder-working Sitka Icon of the Mother of God made its historic pilgrimage to the "lower 48."

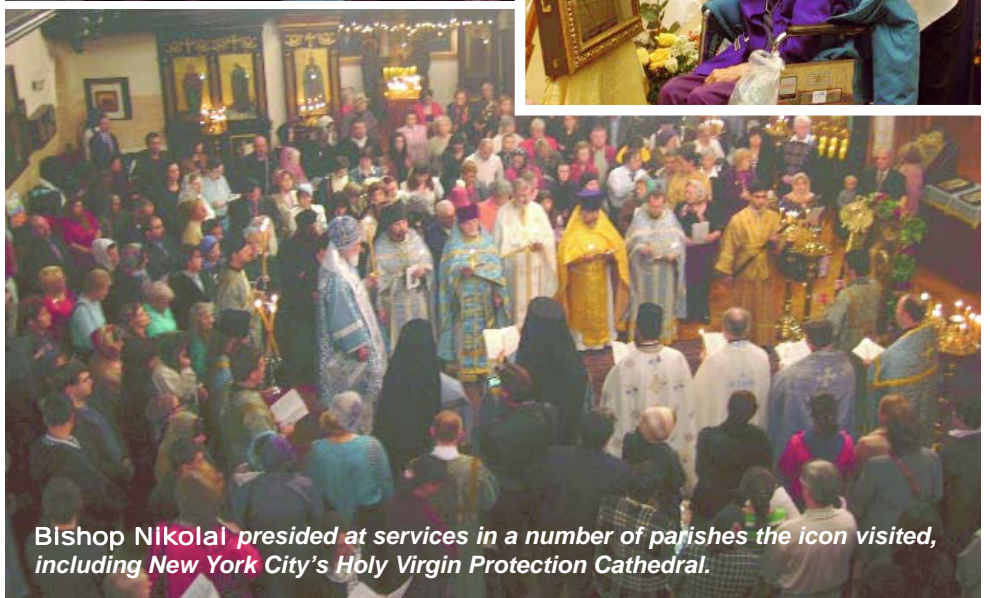
The icon traveled an estimated 12,000 miles during the pilgrimage that began at Saint Spyridon Cathedral, Seattle, WA and ended November 17 at Saint Nicholas Church, Juneau, AK. While the majority of visits were to parishes of the Orthodox Church in America, the icon was also venerated at a number of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, including Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY; the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America; the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate; the American-Carpatho Russian Orthodox Diocese; the Moscow Patriarchate; and other jurisdictions.

While the icon had visited a number of "lower 48" parishes in past years, the two-month pilgrimage marked the first time in history that the icon was available for veneration in so many communities.

His Grace, Bishop Nikolai of Sitka, An-

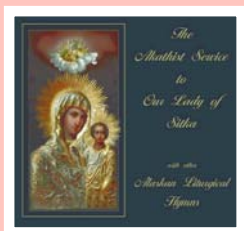


Faithful fill DC's St. Nicholas Cathedral for the celebration of Akathistos Hymn; a woman venerates the icon during its final visit to St. Nicholas Church, Juneau, AK.



Bishop Nikolai presided at services in a number of parishes the icon visited, including New York City's Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral.

RECORDING OF AKATHISTOS HYMN NOW AVAILABLE



A CD recording of the Akathistos Hymn in honor of the Sitka Icon, chanted by clergy of the

Diocese of Alaska, is available for \$20.00 by sending orders to the **RODA, PO Box 210569, Anchorage, AK 99521.**

chorage, and Alaska, presented plans for the pilgrimage to members of the Holy Synod of Bishops at their fall 2004 session. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman and the hierarchs enthusiastically endorsed the pilgrimage plans.

Special services, including the Akathistos Hymn in the icon's honor, were celebrated in every parish along the pilgrimage's "coast-to-coast" route. Bishop Nikolai presided or concelebrated at services in several locations.

The icon, a 19th-century variation of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, is adorned with a magnificent gold and silver covering. It was commissioned Saint Innocent Venia-

minov in the early 1800s for Sitka's Archangel Michael Cathedral, where it has been enshrined for some 150 years. The icon is attributed to the hand of Vladimir Borovikovsky, a leading artist of the time and one of Russia's most revered painters. Miraculously, the icon survived a fire that destroyed the original cathedral in 1966. Over the years, many healings and miracles have been credited through the intercession of the Holy Virgin in response to prayers offered by countless faithful before the icon.

Extensive photo galleries of the icon's visits may be viewed on the Diocese of Alaska's web site at <http://www.dioceseofalaska.org>. ■

InSites

Mall from 9

The malling of religion

stole that symbolizes their service to Christ's.

The apex of the Liturgy is eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ "for the remission of sins and life eternal." What spiritual refreshment! Yet one can feast at the mall. Food courts and restaurants abound. No need for home-cooked meals with the family around the table – sharing, talking, communicating and communing with one another – since Boston Market offers "home-cooked" fast food.

But can the mall transform a person? In a manner of speaking, yes. Glamor Shots can transform a 13-year old girl into a movie star ala Jon Benet. Salons offer hair extensions, hair coloring [in a wide array of colors not found in nature], tanning booths, and fingernails with glitter, initials, and other oddities. High-end department stores offer makeovers guaranteed to make adult women and men – yes, they sell make-up for guys! – look two decades younger. The Church, on the other hand, also transforms people, but from the inside out. It is a deeper, richer, life-altering – or, rather, life-giving – transformation that transcends age and appearance and affects the inner person, that ignores how one looks while focusing on who one is and what one is called to be.

On Pascha, churches are packed; it's the biggest day of the Church year. The mall's counterpart is "Black Friday" – the day after Thanksgiving – the year's busiest sales day, on which "attendance" skyrockets as retailers anticipate record revenues to pump "new life" into otherwise sluggish seasons. Unlike the Church, where people gather quietly, confess their sins, and seek solitude in the midst of others, the mall offers quite the opposite – salespersons shouting over counters, parents shouting at their kids, and cell phone users shouting the familiar litany, "Can you hear me now?" and broadcasting inane conversations to one and all.

Ultimately, the mall consumes the consumer, swallowing up the individual into a sea of humanity, activity, and chaos. Whether one is drawn to the mall by sales, food, amusements, peers, or sheer boredom, the mall has become the temple in which homage is paid to the dollar and the "ultimate shopping experience" is consummated. What a far cry from the Church, where the individual is recognized for his or her unique role within the community, the parish family; where each member is called to the chalice by name; where we remain the unique persons God created us to be while engaging in a common union with Christ and each other.

It is the Church, the true house of worship, that transforms us, refreshes us, delights us, and reminds us that we are the living temples of the God Who consumes us with His undying and eternal love. ■

Mary Ann Bulko is a member of Holy Trinity Church, Randolph, NJ, and a frequent contributor to The Orthodox Church.

InMemoriam

Editorial request: Please inform the TOC editorial office by phone [630/668-3071] or e-mail [jjm@oca.org] when a clergy or clergy wife death occurs so announcements may be made on the OCA web site and in TOC in a timely manner.

Deacon Alexander Sulakov

TORONTO, ON, CANADA – Deacon Alexander Sulakov of Christ the Saviour Sobor here was killed in an automobile accident during a visit to Odessa, Ukraine, on October 4, 2005. His father, the Very Rev. Pavel Sulakov, was also killed, and his brother, Alexei Sulakov, was injured.

Deacon Alexander was born in Bolshie-Korani, Ukraine, on August 15, 1965. He graduated from secondary school in Odessa and from the Odessa Medical College as a doctor's assistant. In 1990, he graduated from the Odessa Theological Seminary, after which he continued his studies at the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy, from which he graduated in 1994. He had served as sacristan in the Odessa cathedral and as a reader and preacher in his father's parish.

With his wife, Anna Poloudennaya, and children Iuri and Elizabeth, he immigrated to Canada, where he began nursing studies. He was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on August 27, 2000, by His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada, at Toronto's Christ the Saviour Sobor, to which he was assigned as deacon. In the face of many challenges, he completed his nursing studies and was immediately employed.

Funeral services and interment were celebrated in Odessa.

May the memory of Deacon Alexander and his father be eternal! ■

The Rev. John M. Limbeson

LAGUNA WOODS, CA – The Rev. John M. Limbeson, a retired priest of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, fell asleep in the Lord at his home here after a lengthy illness on Friday, August 19, 2005.

Father John was born in Cleveland, OH, on March 22, 1922. After completing his secondary education, he enrolled in Case Institute of Technology, interrupting his studies in 1943 to serve in the US Army, in which he attained the rank of lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. In 1946, he was honorably discharged and resumed his studies, graduating in 1948. He completed additional studies at California State University.

After completing the late vocations program and the Saint Stephen Course of Studies, he was ordained into the Holy Diaconate in 1980 by His Eminence, Archbishop Valerian, and assigned to Holy Trinity Church, Los Angeles, CA. In 1985, he was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel and assigned to Saint Anne Mission, Pomona, CA. In 1993, he was transferred to Saints Constantine and Helen Church, Indianapolis, IN. After retirement from active ministry in 1997, he and his wife Betty returned to California.

Father John was a charter member of the American Romanian Orthodox Youth and served as its first national president from 1950 until 1954. From 1993 until 1995, he served as AROY's national spiritual advisor. He also served as treasurer of the Episcopate Council from 1995 until 1999. Throughout his life, he was involved in many pan-Orthodox organizations.

Funeral services were celebrated at Saint Luke Church, Garden Grove, CA, with interment in Holy Transfiguration Monastery cemetery, Ellwood City, PA.

Besides his wife Betty, Father John is survived by a son, John; a daughter, Merry Ann [Mrs.Serge] Loukianoff; and three grandchildren.

May Father John's memory be eternal! ■

Nativity poetry

Written words that reveal the *Living Word!*

VICTORIA M. JONES

One of the most marvelous elements of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ is the poetic diction used to engage us all in this event. By listening closely to the expressions sung or chanted, we participate actively in Christ's birth.

In the miracle of the Lord's incarnation, a poetic truth is revealed: "God becomes man so that man might become God." This paradox – something that seems contradictory but is true – is at the heart of our faith and is emphasized in the language used in the festal services. Seeming contradictions are interwoven into the very essence of the Nativity, for in giving birth to the man Jesus, the Mother of God also gives birth to the "pre-eternal Word of God." Thus, Mary is the human agent in God's plan for our salvation, since "for our sake the Eternal God was born as a little child" [Nativity kontakion]. The manger holds "the uncontainable God" and "the cave is Heaven." Common elements take on uncommon attributes through the coming of Christ.

The arrival of the Magi further illustrates the poetry of contradictions: "Those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness" [Nativity troparion].

One of the most enticing elements of the poetic diction expressed during the Great Feast of the Nativity is illustrated by the repeated use of *chiasmus*, the Greek word for "cross." A chiasmus, a reversal in the order of words in two otherwise parallel phrases, is a type of rhetorical device in which the second part of a phrase is balanced against the first. Another example would be in the Irmos of the Ninth Ode of the Nativity Kanon: "The Virgin [is] the Throne of the Cherubim; the Manger a room, in which Christ, the God Whom nothing can contain, is laid." This pattern of crossing and building images is also revealed in the Nativity troparion. Through

His Nativity, Jesus "has shone to the world the light of wisdom."

Hence, He is "the Sun of Righteousness and the Orient from on high," for the sun rises in the east, the Orient. The unmistakable message in this use of the imagery of light also prepares us for Christ's Transfiguration.

Another type of literary device woven into the poetic words of the Nativity services is *foreshadowing*, as illustrated in the Apostikha: The Magi offered to Him "precious gifts: refined gold and frankincense and myrrh they offered to the Immortal One as to one three days dead." The gifts delivered by the Magi connect both in imagery and meaning to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and the Nativity itself foreshadows these events. Likewise, the taxation demanded by Caesar serves as foreshadowing, as referred to in the stikhera on the Praises: "Therefore, as we pay our earthly tribute, we also offer Thee the wealth of our Orthodox Faith." The connections we make during the Nativity services allow us to perceive meaning in many other feasts.

The use of rhetorical questions further draws us into the meaning and joy of this

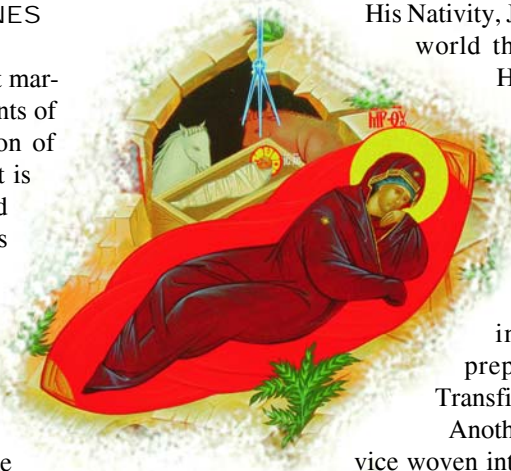
19 Christian Education

20 Stewardship

21 Liturgical Music

22 Evangelization/Missions

24 Youth/Young Adult Ministry



feast. In the Kathisma Hymn, the reader chants, "How can a womb contain Him Whom nothing can contain?" This teases the mind with another paradox: "How can He remain in His Father's bosom, yet rest in His mother's arms?" God takes on the human nature so that we might become "partakers of the glory that will be revealed" [1 Peter 5:1]. This hymn continues to guide us through the paradoxical to the truthful: "Having no flesh, He purposely assumes it for our sake." The imagery of contrasts persists, for "desiring to make us citizens of the world on high, Christ is born on earth as a man." By descending to earth, Christ reveals the heights of heaven, as revealed at his Ascension.

In the festal Kanon, the breadth of this divine plan is even more sweeping in scope, as it refers to the very act of creation: "Adam was made from dust, yet he shared God's life-giving breath. Thou hast assumed a body of lowly clay, O Christ. By sharing our humble flesh, Thou hast made our race partakers of divinity. By becoming mortal man yet remaining God, Thou hast raised us from death to life." These words are simple and direct: In the coming of Christ, the "Lord has sent redemption to His people." By singing these words in the festal services – Compline, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy – we can revel in the beauty of the truth incarnate. ■

RESOURCES

New book great for adult Bible study

Looking for a refreshing new resource for private reading or your adult Bible study class? The Orthodox Research Institute, Rollinsford, NH, recently released ***Prepare O Bethlehem: Reflections on the Scripture Readings for the Christmas and Epiphany Season*** by the Rev. William Mills, rector of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church, Charlotte, NC. The book features a collection of pastoral reflections on the Gospel lessons read during the Nativity season, devoting special attention to the true "reason for the season" – the birth of Jesus Christ.

Father William is also the author of another excellent resource, ***From Pascha to Pentecost: Reflections on the Gospel of John***.

Both volumes are available from the **Orthodox Research Institute, c/o Daryle Lamoureux, 20 Silver Lane, Rollinsford, NH 03869; 617/335-1036; info@orthodoxresearchinstitute.org**. Quantity discounts are available. ■

Stewardship

A stewardship primer

You can't put a "price" on the Church!

FATHER JOHN DRESKO

"And He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And He called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living" [Mark 12:41-44].

In this Scripture passage, Our Lord teaches us about the true importance of giving. By singling out the widow who gave the two copper coins and exalting her, Jesus was telling us that the amount of money donated is not the primary goal of stewardship, but rather, our deep, inner, spiritual heart. That heart is what we use when we make decisions about our life, about God, about the Church, about giving. If we have a heart that is truly turned to God and has seen Him and heard His words, then those decisions are very easy to make.

When I approach decisions with that kind of attitude, God leads me to the right choice. It is not always the easiest choice. It may not always be the choice I want. It may not even be a choice I understand. But it is the right one. When I contemplate stewardship and giving, I begin the same way. The answer comes back to us in the words of our Lord: stewardship is not about giving some time, some talent, some money and some effort to the Church!! Stewardship is very simple: it is about giving *ourselves* to God and the Church – completely and without reservation. God gives us the gift of life, and we give it back to Him – it is that simple.

If we really give our lives to God, however, that is reflected in various choices that we make and in the kind of life we live. For some people, for example, giving \$100.00 to the parish equates to the widow's two copper coins. For others, however, even \$1000.00 is a pittance and a miserly gesture to the Church. It is not the amount that's important, but the location and desire of the heart

When our hearts are full of light and the life of God, it is very easy to give to Him and the Church. When our hearts are empty and devoid of His presence, even the meager "dues" that many parishes still require become a source of irritation and resentment for us. The life of God and the life of the Church can't be equated to a "price." If we are giving what we think the Church is "worth," then it is not worth much at all to us. Even a \$2000.00 pledge simply equates to a payment or two on a current mortgage. So if we look at it financially, my house is more valuable to me than God's house.

In addition to financial gifts, God asks us for gifts of time and talent. The "commitment" of signing a pledge card is frightening for some, but God does expect us to give of everything we have.

Stewardship can only be understood in this way.

1 My gift to God must be the first portion of God's gift to me. God gets the first and the best portion of my life. If my gift is monetary, I should make my pledge and write my check before I pay any other bills. If my gift is time, I should try to arrange my other time around what I need to do for Him. If my gift is talent, I offer that talent to Him before anyone else – even my boss or my spouse. How many handymen who could build a house if they so wanted have never offered their talents to the Church because they are busy puttering at home? How many other examples can we come up with?

2 My gift to God can only be made after careful, honest reflection – honesty about the amount, honesty about my feelings of its importance, and honesty about the gift itself. Taking an honest look at how much we give begins with looking at how much God has given us. If I make \$40,000.00 per year and give \$250.00 to the Church, that comes out to about one-sixth of one percent of my salary! The Biblical minimum of giving is ten percent – a *tithe* – from what we call gross income. Do any of us come close to being in the same neighborhood?

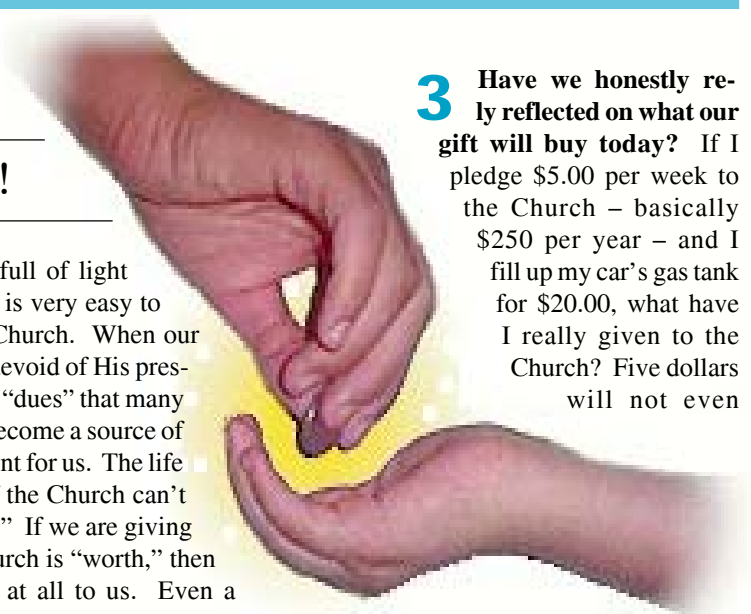
3 Have we honestly really reflected on what our gift will buy today? If I pledge \$5.00 per week to the Church – basically \$250 per year – and I fill up my car's gas tank for \$20.00, what have I really given to the Church? Five dollars will not even

buy dinner at McDonald's anymore!

And that's 2005 dollars; what if I am giving the same five dollars a week that I was giving five or ten years ago? How has inflation eroded that money?

4 My gift to God is a genuine reflection of my heart. If I give \$400.00 per month to the bank on my car loan, but think the Church is fleecing me for \$20.00 per month, I don't have a giving problem; I have a heart problem. If I go grocery shopping and write a check when I leave for \$150.00, but think \$20.00 per month is too much for the Bread of Life, I have a heart problem. If I go to a restaurant and spend \$50.00 for dinner but gripe about the costs of sharing the Body and Blood of Christ, I have a heart problem. If I cheat the Church out of regular giving by pleading about my "cash flow" while ignoring the fact that the Church has the same bills and the same "cash flow," I have a heart problem.

Jesus knew all about stewardship, all about giving, and all about excuses and heart problems! He spoke about giving and possessions three times as often as He spoke about what we normally consider to be "spiritual" matters. When we look at how we approach our relationship to the Lord and His Church vis-à-vis giving, it is wise to remember His words: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" [Matthew 6:19-21]. ■



Liturgical Music

Music in our worship

Part 1/ Dialogue: The participation of *all* the people

DAVID DRILLOCK

There is not a single liturgical service in the Orthodox Church that does not use chanting and singing extensively. Why is the Church's worship expressed in song? The Liturgy begins with the exclamation: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit." With these words we are invited to "come and see," to enter into and experience the foretaste of a heavenly reality, the Kingdom of heaven on earth, which manifests itself in the Church's liturgy. In this reality there is already expressed a transformation of our present world and of us who dwell in it. We are not simply inhabitants living in a particular spot on the planet, but we are "standing in the temple of Thy glory, and we think that we are in heaven." Not only is our life being transformed, but all aspects of the world participate in this transformation. A simple table becomes the throne of the Lord. Bread and wine are transformed into the very life of Christ. And the syllables that make up our language of communication become words filled with the Holy Spirit. The words that are uttered from our lips are words of the Holy Spirit, words that are spoken of and by God. The Kingdom of God, experienced in the Liturgy, is thus an expression of the divine beauty: singing, hymnography, iconography, ritual, and solemnity are all part of what is experienced by the faithful as the epiphany or manifestation of "heaven on earth."

All worship in the Orthodox Church is regulated by the *ordo*, which not only establishes the structure of each service celebrated, but determines both the prayers and hymns that are to be chanted and regulates, as well, the actions that accompany the prayer: e.g. censuring, processions and entrances, light and darkness, standing, sitting, kneeling, and prostrating. Church singing is also regulated – regulated not only by the text which it serves, but by the liturgical function it accompanies. Thus, the selection of the music that we use in worship should be based upon liturgical considerations and nurture appropriate attitudes of prayer.

A structural analysis of our liturgical services would distinguish the following forms

of prayer which call for the use of song: dialogue, psalmody, and hymnography. In this issue, we will look at the importance of dialogue.

Dialogue: The participation of all the people. A basic form of corporate Christian prayer is *dialogue*. Dialogue has occupied a central place in liturgical worship from the very beginning. Dialogue is basic to Christian prayer. In fact, the whole relationship of God with His people, from the time of the creation of man to the preaching of John the Baptist, and the life, death, and resurrection of Christ to the present day and hour can be described as a great dialogue between God and man. This dialogue has been initiated by God and one of the ways we respond to Him is in liturgical prayer – prayer in the form of thanksgiving, praise, and supplication.

An example of dialogue in liturgical prayer is the *litany*. The word *litany* comes from the Greek word *lite*, which means "intercession." In the liturgical services, there are a number of litanies: the Great Litany or Litany of Peace, the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the Evening Litany, and the Morning Litany, all of which include invocations or petitions by the celebrant and a response by the people, i.e. a dialogue. In the Great Litany, the celebrant addresses the faithful and establishes an acceptable order of prayer. First he asks, "let us pray to the Lord in

peace," the peace that is only possible because of the mediation of Christ, for it is in Him and through Him that we are able to pray with the certitude that our prayers will be heard and answered. The celebrant continues: "let us pray for the salvation of our souls, for the peace of the whole world, for the union of all." At the conclusion of each petition, the people respond, "Lord have mercy." i.e., "Lord, be gracious to us and receive our prayers." In the Augmented Litany, the petitions are addressed to God Himself: "Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great goodness, we pray Thee, hear us and have mercy." Here the petitions provide for specific requests for the immediate needs of the congregation and its individual members.

The *Anaphora* is another example of the dialogue form. The Eucharistic offering begins with a dialogue between the celebrant and the people. After summoning the people to stand with attentiveness and with fear, the priest blesses the people with the words, "The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you," to which the people respond, "And with your spirit." The priest continues, "Let us lift up our hearts," and the people respond, "We lift them up unto the Lord." "Let us give thanks unto the Lord," exclaims the celebrant, and the people give their agreement: "It is meet and right."

The celebrant, presiding over the gathered community, then offers to God the prayer of thanksgiving of the faithful. This prayer expresses our total gratitude to God for all that He has done for us in creating, saving, and glorifying the world and endowing us with

Music to 27



Evangelization

Inspiring worship

In growing parishes, nothing less than “heaven on earth” will do!

FATHER JONATHAN IVANOFF

When you already have perfection, it can be tempting – and rather easy – to take certain things for granted. This goes for people who are in great physical shape, who have natural athletic ability, or who may have a good voice, good looks, or just good vision. But it can also be true for churches for which liturgical worship is seen as the ultimate revelation of truth and beauty in a fallen and broken world. And this can lead to a few problems with regard to overall parish health and growth.

We are quite fond of quoting the report of Prince Vladimir’s emissaries upon returning from Constantinople. Their famous quote, “We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth,” is often regarded as being completely applicable to any Orthodox service, done anywhere, at anytime. Unfortunately, it is a safe bet to say that, in not a few places, many of the faithful do not feel as if they are in heaven and would argue that worship in their parish is uplifting, edifying, or inspiring.

Worship as “inspiring” is hardly a novel idea: “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the House of the Lord’*” [Psalm 122:1]. Worship is meant to uplift, edify, inspire, and instill a sense of awe [Isaiah 6]. It is the Holy Spirit alone Who “inspires” – Who *in-spirits* Himself into us; anything else we “try” is simply an attempt to manipulate or market the Holy Spirit and the Church, and this cannot and will not work. What makes worship inspiring is nothing more than the encounter with the living God in a real and felt way – the “shared experience” of God’s awesome presence – that makes itself felt most powerfully within the context of the Christian assembly that worships “in spirit and in truth.”

But there are elements of the whole liturgical cycle over which we exert tremendous influence. There are the first impressions: the exterior appearance of the church, the friendliness with which they

are greeted, the appearance of the bulletin, and signage that makes it easy for visitors to navigate the parish plant, are just a few elements that say a lot about a parish’s liturgical experience. And there other elements – dusty icon stands, lipstick smudges on icon, dirty or rusty candle stands, frayed or dirty vestments, socializing during services, to name a few – that send messages, subliminal and otherwise, that “this church does not care.”

While these things are factors at one level, there are larger factors that affect whether worship is seen as inspiring. The singing, the Scripture readings and sermon, and the overall liturgical preparedness and “liturgical presence” (read: composure, dignity, seriousness) of all clergy and servers are crucial. More to the point, such things, if not properly engaged, can actually serve as distractions, tearing worshippers away from focusing on God because the choir sings arrangements far above its ability, the sermon goes nowhere, or the reader

renders the Epistle reading unintelligible because he mumbles. Both the aforementioned “first impression” issues, as well as these “larger factors,” can profoundly affect the experience of worship as inspiring or uninspiring. If our aim is to bring to the Lord the most pleasing, the most competently executed, the highest degree of excellence in liturgical service that we can possibly offer, then it behooves us to take a second look at how we “do” liturgy at our parishes.

Many surveys have shown that unchurched people want a deeper, more tangible, and significant experience and encounter with the living God. And in this regard Orthodox Christianity has much to offer the world. But we cannot and should not show up and assume that we can place ourselves on liturgical autopilot, somehow knowing that everything will come out perfectly without any planning or rehearsal. Surely the Lord can make that possible when He needs to, working within the

context of our own sinfulness, but should we always assume that? Is it right to always assume that, somehow, by God’s Grace, we’ll just “muddle through?” Is that the right way to approach divine worship?

Worship is indeed something that we Orthodox know how to “do.” But it should never be something we take for granted. In serving the Lord with praise and glory, let us offer the very best we have to offer. Only then can worship be inspiring. Only then can we experience the joyful and liberating feeling of being lost, of not knowing, and never caring to know, whether we are in heaven or on earth. ■

Liturgical check list

Is your parish’s worship inspiring? Ask the following.

- ✓ Are the clergy prepared? Have they read the day’s scripture lessons? Have they prayed for guidance and wisdom from the Holy Spirit to serve and preach with great power and conviction?
- ✓ Are the singers prepared? Have they reviewed and practiced the variable hymns? Are they singing music that is beyond their ability? Can they be understood?
- ✓ Have the readers reviewed the Hours and the Epistle reading? Are they familiar and comfortable with the texts? Do they read clearly and intelligibly?
- ✓ Have we fasted that morning? Have we said Rule of Prayer, including the Prayers Before Holy Communion? Are we ready to approach the Holy Mysteries with awe and reverence?
- ✓ Are we prepared to attend church? Are we dressed appropriately and modestly, not drawing attention to ourselves?
- ✓ Is the church clean and in order? Are the proper altar coverings out? Have dead flowers and empty vigil lamps been discarded?



In short, have we done everything possible to prepare ourselves to receive Christ into our midst, the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and God into very lives?

Evangelization

"Bloom where you're planted"

Five missions receive grants

FATHER ERIC TOSI

The Orthodox Church in America's Department of Evangelization is pleased to announce the recipients of OCA Church planting grants for 2006.

Four missions – All Saints of Alaska Mission, Victoria, BC, Canada; Saint Athanasius Mission, Nicholasville, KY; Saint Herman of Alaska Mission, Port Townsend, WA; and Saint John of Kronstadt Church, Lincoln, NE – will receive grants for their third and final year. Awarded a grant for a second year is Holy Ascension Mission, Mount Pleasant, SC.

Funding for the annual grants is raised through donations to the OCA's Mission Appeal every February. As more funds are raised through the appeal, more new mission communities will be able to receive planting grants.

Qualifying missions receive grants of \$15,000.00 per year for a maximum of three years. In order to receive a grant, a mission must match this amount. The combined \$30,000.00 per year must be used exclusively to provide compensation for a full-time, resident priest. This frees the priest to pursue full-time ministry, without having to rely on outside employment. Experience has shown that missions receiving planting grants "mature" to parish status earlier than non-granted missions.

Since the program's inception, 19 mission communities have benefited from financial support from the annual appeal and the Church planting grant program. Many of these communities have "spun-off" additional missions, thereby bringing the Orthodox faith to even more people.

Additional information on the planting grant program and applications may be found on the OCA web site at www.oca.org or may be obtained by sending an e-mail to the Department of Evangelization at evangelization@oca.org. Applications for 2007 grants must be made by August 31, 2006. ■

MISSION possible!

SC mission hosts exhibit

MT. PLEASANT, SC – Faithful of Holy Ascension Mission here recently hosted an exhibit by Russian artist Irina Kotova.

Ms. Kotova's works employ an wide array of mediums and subjects, including religious themes. The exhibit is her first in the US.

Established in 2002, Holy Ascension has experienced steady growth under the guidance of the Rev. John Parker. The mission received an OCA Church planting grant in 2005, thereby enabling Father John to devote his full energies to ministry. Its grant has been renewed for 2006.

With a regular Sunday attendance of nearly 50 faithful, the mission is making final plans for financing the building of a church. Mission members have also taken on the formidable task of hosting the Diocese of the South's assembly in 2006. ■



Fr. John Parker and members of Holy Ascension Mission enjoy exhibit.

Former mission builds church

JACKSONVILLE, FL – His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas and the South recently consecrated the recently built Saint Justin Martyr Church here.

Established as a mission on July 17, 1994, with its first Liturgy celebrated in a college classroom, the parish was the first to receive a Church planting grant from the Orthodox Church in America. Since that time, the community has grown rapidly under the direction of the Rev. Ted Pisarchuk. Over 200 people have been catechized, baptized, or chrismated at Saint Justin's since its planting.

With an average Sunday attendance of 150, the church,

which holds approximately 300, provides plenty of room for growth.

The parish conducts a ministry to the homeless in downtown Jacksonville. With a growing number of youth – an average of 40 children attend weekly – the parish is current seeking a youth pastor. ■



Mission accomplished The new St. Justin Martyr Church in Jacksonville. The parish was the first mission to receive an OCA planting grant.

Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry

Ministry – a month at a time

Put your faith into action in 2006

Often, when we hear the term “youth ministry,” we focus on ways to minister to youth. While it is essential to reach out with the Gospel to young people, especially those with little or no involvement in the life of the Church, the “flip side” of youth ministry focuses on ways youth can minister to others – their families, neighbors, peers, the elderly, and fellow parishioners.

Here are some suggestions for jump-starting your parish’s 2006 youth programs.

January. Nursing home and assisted living residents can be a bit overstimulated before Christmas with visits from carolers, gift-givers, and all sorts of groups. But as soon as the holidays are over, they slip into the opposite experience as visits taper off. January is an ideal time to add a little excitement to residents’ usual routines.

Call a nursing home, assisted living facility, or senior day care center near your parish and volunteer to organize an afternoon of bingo for its residents. While one youth

serves as the caller, the others can pair up with the residents, especially those who may have difficulty seeing or with fine motor skills. Prepare bags of prizes for winners and losers alike, so that no one will return to his or her room empty handed. Fill the bags with sample size hand lotion, hair brushes, kleenex, and other personal care items. In each bag place a note with information on your parish and an icon print. This is a great way to share a little personal sunshine on an otherwise gray winter day.

February has for many years been observed as Orthodox youth month – a time to celebrate how young people are not the *future* of the Church, but an important part of the Church’s *present*.

Ask your priest to help organize “youth Sundays” throughout the month, on which teens and young adults “take over” many of the duties usually tended to by others – taking the collection, holding the Communion cloths, distributing bulletins, hosting and

and cleaning up after the fellowship hour, etc. Young adults can step in to “give the Sunday School teachers a day off” by volunteering to teach a few of their classes.

Want to pull the whole parish together before Great Lent begins on March 6? Organize a festive, pre-lenten pot luck dinner on Friday, February 17 – it’s a fast-free day. Invite the whole parish. Ask people to bring CDs for folk dancing, or prepare entertaining games or skits designed to get everyone involved. Consider a Valentine’s Day theme.

March. Great Lent is a time to spend a little more time thinking about and doing something for others. Every parish has its share of home-bound parishioners, many of whom live alone. Often, they miss being able to attend services regularly, especially the beautiful lenten services.

Ask your priest for a list of home-bound parishioners and pair up to visit them during Great Lent. Before you visit, make a video tape or cassette recording of the Divine Liturgy. Duplicate the tapes and take them with you on your visits. Give one to each person visited so that they can play them whenever they wish.

April. Getting ready for Pascha involves a great deal of preparation, especially in cleaning the church and parish grounds. Set aside a Saturday as a “work day.” Arm everyone with rakes, leaf blowers, and potting plants to spruce up the grounds for the Feast of Feasts. Invite adult parishioners to lend a hand. End the day by attending Great Vespers or Vigil as a group.

May. Now that you’ve gained a lot of experience cleaning up the parish grounds, use your new skills to help elderly parishioners or neighbors give their yards a good spring cleaning. Those who cannot do this for themselves or afford to hire a yard service will be thrilled by your offer!

Tired of yard work? It’s no secret that the number of homeless people is on the rise – and not just in larger cities. Every community has agencies offering housing or hot meals to the homeless. Volunteer to help at a homeless shelter or to provide a meal for the homeless. Consider partnering with another parish in your area or with a youth group from a non-Orthodox community. ■



Young adults making a difference!

Students from St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Crestwood, NY join young adults from Long Island at the OCA chancery in Syosset, NY to pack essential resources for shipment to victims of last year’s terrorist attack on a school in Beslan, Russia. The resources were donated by several parishes.

**NEXT ISSUE/ Making plans
for June, July, and August!**

Become what you are!

Living outside the box

Christ challenges our expectations

Father David Subu

In the Gospel of Saint Luke 13:10-17, we read the following: “Behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, ‘Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.’ And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus healed on the Sabbath; and he said, ‘There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.’”

The miracle in this Gospel story provides us with a message of hope. There are two reasons this Gospel can give us hope. The first is that the woman who is healed does not receive healing because she ask for it, or because she has any great demonstration of faith. Instead, Christ pulls her out from the crowd and heals her. This is reassuring for us because very often we fall into the spiritual illness where we don’t have the strength to “raise up” ourselves to God and ask Him for His help. We might even get depressed to the point that it is difficult to lift our heads to greet another person with a smile. When this happens, God often has to step in, sending us just the right person or event to brighten our day and lead us into His light and life.

The second reason this Gospel is reassuring is because Christ heals the woman on His own terms. The ruler of the synagogue ignored the real power of God in order to promote the routine, the expected, the “normal” – to live “in the box,” so to speak. Jesus shakes up the synagogue by performing this miracle. He challenges the expectations of the so-called “religious” people who would prefer that things fit into their own vision of the how things should be. Because they had a limited idea of the power of God, they were not open to receive His blessings. We need to be open to God at all times, and not attempt to force God to conform to our idea of who He should be.

Both these reasons teach us that God can not be put into a neat little box. He acts as He wills, not as we necessarily want or expect Him to act. He sends us what we need and shows His love in surprising ways.

Now that we are in the final days of preparation for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, we have a perfect opportunity to look at our lives and discern where and how God is acting.

Ask yourself...

- What are my spiritual infirmities – those things that keep me down and prevent me from experiencing God’s love in my life? What can I do to overcome them?
- How have I tried to keep God limited in my life, by acting like the ruler of the synagogue?
- What are the gifts that God has given me for which I need to thank Him? How can I put them into action in my life? How can I use them to help others?

Consider each of these questions carefully. In the chilly days to come, we often like to stay inside and even hibernate. Let’s use this time to go inside our souls as well. ■

Don't "talk about" stewardship!
"Do" stewardship!



Your generous gifts to the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards make the work of our departments possible!
Visit the FOS link at www.oca.org to learn how you and your parish can help expand the Church’s ministries and programs!

2006 national camp conference January 26-29

The 2006 national Orthodox camp conference will be held at the Villa Maria Retreat Center, Frontenac, MN January 26-29.

The pan-Orthodox event, sponsored by the Orthodox Church in America’s Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry, is designed to assist camp administrators, medical staff, and counselors.

The keynote speaker, the Rev. Harry Pappas, rector of Saint Mary Greek Orthodox Church, Minneapolis, MN, will offer presentations on the treasures and challenges of the pan-Orthodox camping experience. Father Pappas has had years of experience ministering at annual camp programs sponsored by the Orthodox communities in the Twin Cities.

“The national conference is a blessed opportunity to gather as one community of faith, dedicated to the strategic planning and implementation of God’s ministry through the camping experience,” said Mrs. Cheryl Morse, chair of the OCA Youth Department. “Whether attending as veterans or as novices in camping ministry, conference participants will find a unique opportunity for spiritual growth, validation, and encouragement.”

Registration forms and travel information may be downloaded at yya.oca.org.

In an effort to share resources, participants are being asked to submit religious ed curricula, camp songbooks, games/activities/crafts, camp schedules, theme ideas, and policies and procedures in advance. Resources will be compiled and distributed to all conference participants. Submissions may be sent in PDF or Word formats to camps@oca.org no later than January 8, 2006. Hard copies may be sent to Saint Mary Cathedral, 2006 National Camp Conference, 1701 Fifth Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413. ■

VISIT THE OCA WEB SITE AT
WWW.OCA.ORG.

Official

Official from 2

HRYCYNIAK, The Rev. Stephen is released from duties at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Milwaukee, WI and appointed rector of St. Nicholas Church, Kenosha, WI/ October 4, 2005.

HUBIAK, Protopresbyter Daniel, who is retired, is released from attachment to St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC and attached to Christ the Savior Mission, Fenwick Island, DE/ September 1, 2005.

* **ION, Rev. Codrut**, who was suspended, has his suspension lifted and is returned to active duty. He is appointed Pastor of Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs Mission, Montreal, QC, Canada/ March 6, 2005.

IONESCU, The Rev. Dumitru is released from duties in the Atlantic Deanery and granted a six month Leave of Absence/ October 1, 2005.

[IUHOS], Archimandrite Nicholas is released from duties at St. Basil Church, Watervliet, NY and assigned rector of Holy Trinity Church, Niagara Falls, NY/ September 1, 2005.

[IUHOS], Archimandrite Nicholas is released from duties as acting chancellor of the former Diocese of New York/New Jersey and as rector of Holy Trinity Church, Niagara Falls, NY and assigned to Holy Cross Monastery, Niagara Falls, NY/ September 26, 2005.

JACKSON, The Rev. Matthew is attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA/ July 10, 2005.

JACOBS, The Rev. Andrew is appointed acting rector of St. Susanna Mission, Sonora, CA/ July 29, 2005.

KASHEVAROV, Deacon Andrew T. is attached to Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Kodiak, AK/ February 12, 2005.

KASHEVAROV, The Rev. Andrew T. is attached to Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Kodiak, AK/ February 13, 2005.

KASHEVAROV, The Rev. Andrew T. is released from duties at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Kodiak, AK and attached to St. Innocent Cathedral, Anchorage, AK/ June 1, 2005.

LEDFORD, The Rev. Thomas (Brooks), who was attached, is appointed temporary administrator of St. Anthony the Great Church, San Antonio, TX/ August 1, 2005.

LIS, The Rev. David is released from duties at St. Theodosius Cathedral, Cleveland, OH and appointed acting rector of Holy Assumption Church, Marblehead, OH/ November 1, 2005.

LUKASHONOK, The Rev. Alexander, who was awaiting assignment in the Diocese of the West, is released from the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West; transferred to the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman; and assigned priest-in-charge of Christ the Savior Mission, Fenwick Island, DE/ August 15, 2005.

LUKASHONOK, The Rev. Alexander is released from duties at Christ the Savior Mission, Fenwick Island, DE and granted a Leave of Absence/ October 3, 2005.

LUTAI, The Rev. Claudiu is released from duties at Holy Transfiguration Mission, Hartford, CT/ September 7, 2005. He is appointed pastor of Holy Resurrection Church, Hayward, CA/ September 8, 2005.

MACARIE, The Rev. Alin Stefan is appointed pastor of SS. Constantine and Helen Mission, Lilburn, GA/ April 10, 2005.

[MANCUSO], Archimandrite Laurence, who was suspended, has his suspension lifted and is attached to St.

Sergius of Radonezh Chapel, Oyster Bay Cove, NY/ October 24, 2005.

MCFATTER, The Rev. Gleb is appointed priest-in-charge of St. Demetrius Mission, Naples, FL/ July 31, 2005.

MOSHER, The Rev. Joshua S. is attached to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY/ September 25, 2005.

MUELLER, The Rev. Elijah, who was acting rector, is appointed rector of St. Clement of Ohrid Church, Merrillville, IN/ July 31, 2005.

NIELSEN, The Rev. Thaddeus is released from duties at Holy Trinity Church, Clayton, WI, assigned priest-in-charge of St. Raphael of Brooklyn Mission, Quincy, IL, and attached to Holy Trinity Church, Overland Park, KS/ October 4, 2005.

OLEKSHY, The V. Rev. Orest, who was on a Leave of Absence, is granted retirement/ September 4, 2005.

PEREZ, Deacon Dimitri is attached to Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA/ July 29, 2005.

PEREZ, The Rev. Dimitri is appointed associate priest at Holy Apostles Mission, Portland, OR/ July 30, 2005.

POP, Deacon Sabin, who was attached to the Michigan Deanery, is assigned to St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI/ May 1, 2005.

POWELL, The Rev. Barnabas, who was awaiting assignment, is appointed acting rector of St. Michael Church, Pueblo, CO/ July 15, 2005.

RESIGA, The Rev. Michael is released from duties at SS. Constantine and Helen Mission, Lilburn, GA, but remains attached there/ March 23, 2005.

RIGDEN-BRISCALL, The Rev. Christopher is released from duties at Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY and from the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman; transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Seraphim; and attached to the Archdiocese of Canada, in which he awaits assignment/ September 1, 2005.

RIGDEN-BRISCALL, The Rev. Christopher, who was awaiting assignment, is attached to St. Herman of Alaska Church, Surrey, BC, Canada/ September 1, 2005.

SAWCHAK, The Rev. Timothy A., in addition to duties at Holy Trinity Church, Overland Park, KS, is appointed dean of the Kansas City Deanery/ August 29, 2005.

SAWCHAK, The Rev. Timothy, who was associate priest, is appointed rector of Holy Trinity Church, Overland Park, KS/ August 28, 2005.

SEARFOORCE, The V. Rev. Matthew, who was awaiting assignment, is appointed acting rector of St. John Chrysostom Church, Philadelphia, PA/ August 1, 2005.

SEKELA, The V. Rev. Michael, who is attached to St. Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL, is granted retirement/ August 10, 2005.

SHKALOV, The Rev. Alexander is released from duties at Christ the Savior Sobor, Toronto, ON, and from the Archdiocese of Canada. He is transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West and awaits assignment/ September 12, 2005.

SOUCEK, The V. Rev. Pavel is released from duties at Holy Assumption Church, Marblehead, OH and granted retirement/ November 1, 2005.

[STEHNACH], Archimandrite Pitirim, who was attached to Holy Resurrection Church, Forest Hills, PA, is now attached to St. Basil Chapel, Cranberry Township,

PA/ September 1, 2005.

STOLERU, The Rev. Nicolae is released from duties at Annunciation Church, Montreal, QC, Canada and attached to the Deanery of Canada/ December 15, 2004. He is appointed pastor of Ascension of the Lord Mission, Montreal, QC, Canada/ February 20, 2005.

STOLERU, Deacon Paul Catalin is assigned to Ascension Mission, Montreal, QC, Canada/ May 2, 2005.

STOYCHEV, The Rev. Rumen is released from duties at St. Mary Nativity Church, Masontown, PA and assigned acting rector of St. John the Divine Church, Monessen, PA/ September 1, 2005.

TOTIN, The Rev. Michael, rector of St. Michael Church, Pittsburgh, PA, is granted retirement/ February 27, 2005.

TSJOUMAN, The V. Rev. Gregory, who was awaiting assignment, is appointed acting rector of St. Michael Church, Portage, PA, and SS. Peter and Paul Church, Vintondale, PA/ July 1, 2005.

VALLENS, Deacon Alexander M. is attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery Church, South Canaan, PA/ May 14, 2005.

VRATO, Deacon Gregory James is attached to SS. Peter and Paul Church, Philadelphia, PA/ July 10, 2005.

WASHINGTON, Protodeacon Alexis is released from duties at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL and from the omophorion of Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest and transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West, where he awaits assignment/ October 12, 2005.

WEBSTER, The Rev. Alexander F. C. is released from duties at the Protection of the Mother of God Church, Falls Church, VA, and attached to the Atlantic Deanery for special assignment in the military/ June 20, 2005. He is released from the omophorion of Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate and transferred to the omophorion of Metropolitan Herman for assignment in the chaplaincy/ October 25, 2005.

ZDINAK, The V. Rev. John is released from duties as acting dean of the Kansas City Deanery. All his other duties remain the same/ August 29, 2005.

ZEBRUN, The V. Rev. Basil, in addition to duties at St. Barbara Mission, Fort Worth, TX, is appointed temporary dean of the Southcentral Deanery/ August 3, 2005.

■ RETIRED

BONA, Protodeacon Alexis is granted retirement. He remains attached to Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, NH/ October 1, 2005.

HOROSKY, The V. Rev. John is granted retirement, effective July 31, 2005. He awaits assignment.

OLEKSHY, The V. Rev. Orest is granted retirement. He is attached to Holy Resurrection Sobor, Saskatoon, SK, Canada and given the title of pastor emeritus/ September 4, 2005.

SEKELA, The V. Rev. Michael is granted retirement, effective August 10, 2005. He remains attached to St. Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL.

SOUCEK, The V. Rev. Pavel is granted retirement. He is attached to St. Theodosius Cathedral, Cleveland, OH/ November 1, 2005.

TOTIN, The Rev. Michael is granted retirement. He is attached to St. Basil Chapel, Cranberry Township, PA/ February 27, 2005.

■ DEATHS

BUTCHKO, The V. Rev. Basil, who was attached to

Official to 27

Official

Official from 26

the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada, died on September 22, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

GRIGORESCU, The Rev. Gheorghe, who was retired and attached to Holy Cross Church, San Jose, CA, died October 7, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

LIMBESON, The Rev. John, who was attached to St. Anne Church, Pomona, CA, died in retirement/ August 19, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

[MADISON], Archimandrite Hilary, who was attached to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery, South Canaan, PA, died in retirement/ August 14, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

SOROKA, The V. Rev. Vladimir, who was attached to St. Nicholas Church, McKees Rocks, PA, died in retirement/ August 4, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

SULAKOV, Deacon Alexander, who was assigned to Christ the Savior Sobor, Toronto, ON, Canada, died on October 4, 2005. *May his memory be eternal!*

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

IONESCU, The Rev. Dumitru is granted a six month Leave of Absence. He is attached to Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mission, Las Vegas, NY/ October 1, 2005.

LUKASHONOK, The Rev. Alexander is granted a Leave of Absence. He is attached to St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC/ October 3, 2005.

SUSPENDED

BLUMENTRITT, The Rev. Timothy, who was attached to Three Hierarchs Chapel, St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood, NY, is suspended from all priestly duties/ June 28, 2005.

CICI, The Rev. Foti, who was priest-in-charge of St. Astius Mission, Toronto, ON, Canada, is suspended from all priestly duties/ September 2, 2005.

FORD, The Rev. Thomas, who was on a Leave of Absence and attached to Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL, is suspended from all priestly duties/ October 4, 2005.

JANOWSKI, The V. Rev. Alexander, who is retired and attached to the Bishop's Chapel of St. Silouan the Athonite, Johnstown, ON, Canada, is suspended from all priestly duties/ August 24, 2005.

DEPOSED

ANDRISOAIA, The Rev. Ioan, who was suspended, is now deposed from all sacred functions of the Holy Priesthood and his name is removed from the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by the Holy Synod of Bishops / October 18, 2005.

BLUMENTRITT, The Rev. Timothy, who was suspended, is now deposed from all sacred functions of the Holy Priesthood and his name is removed from the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by the Holy Synod of Bishops / October 18, 2005.

FORD, The Rev. Thomas, who was suspended, is now deposed from all sacred functions of the Holy Priesthood and his name is removed from the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America by the Holy Synod of Bishops/ October 18, 2005.

PARISHES

ALBANIAN ARCHDIOCESE/ Closed: SS. Peter and Paul Church, Rochester, NY/ October 24, 2005.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANADA/ Name change: Annunciation to the Theotokos/St. Nicholas Cathedral, Ottawa, ON, Canada is renamed Annunciation Cathe-

Mission from 6

Mission heart of Gospel

Church itself. And what a wonder it is, as Saint Paul the "consummate missionary" observed, that God calls us "broken earthly vessels" to continue His mission, to become co-workers and fellow ministers, and to bring all mankind to the knowledge of the truth.

As Our Lord observed, "the harvest is plenty." Let us accept the challenge to labor in His vineyard, to bring in the harvest of faith, and to reveal the love of God as missionaries, as His co-workers and fellow ministers, as the Body of Christ. ■

Adapted from Metropolitan Herman's address at the November 10 OCMC banquet, Chicago, IL.

Music from 21

Participation for all

the Kingdom which is to come. The faithful join with the angels, singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" The sing-

ing of the angelic hymn is followed by the prayer of remembrance that includes the words of Jesus to His disciples, "Take, eat, this is my Body... drink of it, all of you, this is my Blood..." to which the faithful signify their acceptance and agreement with the "Amen." Then the celebrant offers the eucharistic gifts to God, "Thine own of Thine own..." This prayer concludes with the singing of "we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee, and we pray to Thee, O our God."

What is evident from the texts of the Litany and Anaphora is the call to a most elementary form of communal participation – the prayer of the *whole* gathering. "Let us lift up our hearts." "We lift them up unto the Lord." "In peace let us pray to the Lord." "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee..." As Paul Meyendorff notes, the first person plural is always used in liturgical prayer to emphasize that it is the prayer of the *entire* community. Indeed, the Greek word for *worship* – *leiturgia* – means a common or corporate action in which *everyone* takes an active part. ■

NEXT ISSUE/ Singing the Psalms

Milestones

At St. George Cathedral, Toledo, OH, Fr. Matthew-Peter Butrie offered prayers for Fr. Venseslav and Marina Dimitroff on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday, November 6, 2005. The couple was married in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1955, after which Fr. Venseslav served the city's St. John Church. Fr. Venseslav served as pastor of the cathedral from 1975 until his retirement in 1995.

dral/ September 15, 2005.

DIocese OF NEW ENGLAND/ Closed: St. Nicholas Church, Stratford, CT/ October 24, 2005.

ROMANIAN EPISCOPATE/ New missions effective May 14, 2005:

Columbus, OH: St. Stephen the Protomartyr Mission. PO Box 275, 1799 West 5 Ave., Columbus, OH 43212; Served by Ohio/Western PA Deanery clergy.

Montreal, QC: Ascension of the Lord Mission. c/o 1581 Rue Barre, Villa St. Laurent, QC H4L 4M5. Meeting at St. Matthew Church, 4940 Ave. McDonald, Montreal, QC. The Rev. Nicolae Stoleru, pastor.

Montreal, QC: Holy Brancoveanu Martyrs Mission. c/o 2555 Hingston Ave. #36, Montreal, QC H4A 2J3. The Rev. Codrut Ion, pastor.



DIocese OF WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK/ Status change: Holy Trinity Church, Niagara Falls, NY, is now a monastery comprised of the former Holy Trinity Church and properties. It is a monastery of the Diocese of Washington and New York and an institution of the Orthodox Church in America, known as Holy Cross Monastery, Niagara Falls, NY/ September 26, 2005.

DIocese OF THE WEST/ New location: St. Barbara Monastery, Santa Barbara, CA is now located at 15799 Ojai Rd., Santa Paula, CA 93060. 805/921-1563; sbmonastery@juno.com.

DIocese OF WESTERN PA/ Closed: Holy Resurrection Church, Forest Hills, PA, and **St. Michael Church**, Pittsburgh, PA/ September 30, 2005.

* Indicates non-OCA clergy. ■

NorthAmerica



Hierarchs and UN dignitaries who participated in UN prayer service.

NY site of UN prayer service

UN community gathers for fifth consecutive year

New York, NY/ OCA Communications

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral here was filled to capacity on the evening of October 11, 2005 for the fifth annual Orthodox prayer service for members of the United Nations community.

This year's service commemorated the UN's 60th anniversary.

Co-sponsored by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas and the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Church, the service was highlighted by addresses by His Excellency, Ambassador Dr. Milos Prica, permanent representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN, and His Eminence, Metropolitan Christopher of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the US and Canada. The theme of their addresses was "Building a Community to Work Towards Peace and Tolerance."

Mr. Edward Mortimer, director of communications for the office of the UN secretary-general, also read greetings on behalf of UN secretary general Kofi Annan.

Besides numerous hierarchs and clergy,

including His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, many ambassadors and delegates representing various UN missions, Orthodox Christians serving on the UN secretariat staff, and heads of Orthodox NGOs attended the service, which was open to the public.

Co-chairs of the joint commission responsible for planning the service were His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian of the Armenian Church of America and His Grace, Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, auxiliary to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. ■

OCMC names new communications director

St. Augustine, FL/ OCMC

Mr. Mickey Hodges was recently named director of communications for the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

Prior to joining OCMC, Mr. Hodges ran his own marketing communications firm for 13 years. He served as chief writer and first

editor of a devotional guide published by Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, and his writings have appeared prominently in the *Closer Walk New Testament* (Zondervan, 1990). He has also helped translate portions of the Old Testament for the *Orthodox Study Bible*.

OCMC is the pan-Orthodox missionary arm of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. ■

Armenian bishop elected NCCC president-elect

Hunt Valley, MD/ NCCC

His Grace, Bishop Vicken Aykazian of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America [Eastern] was elected president-elect of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA at the organization's general assembly here November 8-10, 2005.

Bishop Vicken will begin his duties in January 2006 when the current president-elect, the Rev. Michael E. Livingston, assumes the presidency.

Bishop Vicken's election comes at a time when the NCC's Oriental and Orthodox members have been reevaluating membership in the organization, especially since the unexpected, unilateral withdrawal last summer of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, who chairs the NCC's Membership and Ecclesial Relations Committee, said the Antiochian withdrawal surprised most NCC members and suggested that the NCC study methods used to improve relations between the Orthodox churches and the World Council of Churches in recent years.

The Antiochian withdrawal was "particularly alarming to Orthodox" NCC members because of fears their move "could have been dramatic in the lives of other Orthodox communions," Father Kishkovsky.

Visits by the NCC's general secretary to various Orthodox hierarchs, including His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, had been reassuring, Father Kishkovsky said. The visits pointed to the need for NCC members to "become better acquainted and more deeply informed about the lives and processes" of other members, he added. ■

SCOBA bishops establish prison ministry

South Bound Brook, NJ/ OCA

Prison ministry will be the focus of the latest agency established by the hierarchs belonging to the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA].

The decision to create the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry [OCPM] was made by the SCOBA hierarchs at their November 15, 2005 meeting hosted by His Eminence, Metropolitan Constantine at the Consistory of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA here.

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, chaired the meeting, at which His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman represented the Orthodox Church in America.

The work of OCPM – the first national pan-Orthodox ministry of its kind – will begin in 2006 with the appointment of a board and election of officers.

The hierarchs also endorsed the convocation of a clergy seminar on Christian/Muslim Relations in the Dallas area in early 2006. Similar seminars will be offered in other regions to assist clergy in understanding the rapid growth of Islam in the US.

A comprehensive report highlighting International Orthodox Christian Charities' responses to victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Asian tsunami, and the Pakistan earthquake was presented by Mr. Dean Triantafilou, IOCC executive director. Reports were also given by the directors of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, which now lists chapters on over 200 North American campuses; the Orthodox Christian Network; and the Orthodox Christian Education Commission.

Also participating in the meeting were His Eminence, Archbishop Nicolae, Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese; His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas, Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese; His Eminence, Metropolitan Joseph, Bulgarian Orthodox Church; His Grace, Bishop Antoun, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, who represented His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip; His Eminence, Archbishop Antony, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA; and His Grace, Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, SCOBA general secretary. ■

Where patience is a virtue

NYC's St. Nicholas Church waits to be rebuilt

New York/ Religion News Service

When terrorists slammed their hijacked airplanes into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, they also destroyed historic Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, as debris from the south tower pancaked the tiny church nestled at its foot.

Four years later, parishioners are still waiting to rebuild the church, a congregation of about 70 families but with a much wider ministry in the Wall Street financial district. Greek immigrants acquired the 19th century property in the early 1920s and turned it into a home for their fledgling congregation.

"There was a lot of history in that church," said John Couloucoundis, a longtime parishioner. "A lot of people had brought icons and contributed to make it really a little gem. But the thing you sensed more in Saint Nicholas was this close-knit community, these people who had been involved with the church for generations and supported it."

That all changed on September 11.

"That day was a nightmare," said Mr. John Pitsikalas, parish council president. "The destruction was so complete," adds Mr. Couloucoundis, "it was amazing that we found anything at all." A few remnants were dug out of the rubble: two torn icons, a charred Bible, three wax candles fused together from the heat, a twisted candelabra. But precious relics, including those of Saint Nicholas himself, were never recovered.

Parishioners say the congregation was in shock but the determination to rebuild was

immediate.

"Within about two weeks of the destruction of the church, the parish had already organized, was having meetings and was trying to figure out how to go forward," Mr. Couloucoundis said. "We weren't going to leave that part of New York."

But four years later there is still no church, its future irrevocably tied to the future of Ground Zero. The church cannot rebuild, or even draw up design plans, until all the complex ownership, security and architectural issues surrounding the World Trade Center site are sorted out.

"The assurances that we have from the state, the federal level, the city level, is that the church will be rebuilt," Mr. Couloucoundis says.

"I think that one of the problems is the logistics of doing that amidst all the other demands and constraints of the Ground Zero area."

Plans call for the rebuilt church to feature an interdenominational center that will focus on the spiritual side of 9/11 along with being a traditional parish church.

"We're not a big parish, but we'll have hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world wanting to stop by and spend some time and reflect," Mr. Couloucoundis said. "It's a place where we can all come together and think about what happened and maybe spend a little bit of time thinking about how to avoid such a thing in the future."

In the meantime, parishioners are worshipping at parish in Brooklyn, patient but anxious to move ahead. "We do have a lot of older members, and they're getting frustrated," Pitsikalas says. "You know, they want to be alive to see that church built." ■



St. Nicholas Church stood in the shadow of the World Trade Center, shown in background.

WorldBriefs

RUSSIA

Property returned to representation church in Moscow

A decade after Saint Catherine the Great Martyr Church here became the headquarters of the Orthodox Church in America's representation to the Orthodox Church of Russia, the Grabar Art Restoration Institute returned a significant portion of property it had occupied to the parish.

Archimandrite Zacchaeus, dean, and Mr. Alexei P. Vladimirov, the institute's director, signed the act officially transferring the property to the parish on November 10, 2005.

After the Russian Revolution, the church was closed and used for secular purposes, most recently the Grabar Institute. While it was returned to the Church in the early 1990s, the institute continued to occupy a significant portion of the parish's property.

"Originally the parish's 'winter church' dedicated to the Icon of Christ 'Not Made by Hands,' the property had two chapels," Archimandrite Zacchaeus said. "It will temporarily house the administrative offices of the OCA representation and the parish. Once necessary funds are collected, the property will be restored and once again become an active temple in which divine services will be celebrated."

In recent years, the parish's property has undergone a number of impressive improvements. Most recently, frescoes in the main church building that were whitewashed in Soviet times were uncovered and restored.

For additional news on the representation church, log on to www.st-catherine.ru/en/. ■



On November 21 Archimandrite Zacchaeus blessed parish property formerly used by the Grabar Institute.

JERUSALEM

New Patriarch of Jerusalem enthroned despite Israeli warnings

Religious and political figures from around the world gathered in Jerusalem's ancient Church of the Sepulchre for the enthronement of His Beatitude, Patriarch Theophilus III as the 140th Patriarch of Jerusalem on November 22, 2005.

Patriarch Theophilus was elected by patriarchate's Holy Synod on August 22, 2005 to replace Patriarch Irenaeos I, whom the Synod removed from office in May 2005 for his involvement in a scandal in which Church properties were sold or leased to Israeli investors.

The enthronement took place despite a November 10 warning by the Israeli government, which refuses to recognize his election and backs his predecessor. According to a centuries-old tradition, the Patriarch's election must be approved by Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority, the latter two of which voiced their support.

A native of Greece, the 53-year-old Patriarch has lived in the Holy Land since 1964 and has served in various high level capacities within the patriarchate.



Patriarch Theophilus III of Jerusalem

In his enthronement speech, Patriarch Theophilus pledged to help his Church "emerge from the sea of corruption and fraud." ■

UKRAINE

Autoccephalous churches show support for Ukrainian Church

The celebration of the 70th birthday of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Volodymyr of Kyiv and All Ukraine here during the week of November 20, 2005 was marked by unanimous support for Ukraine's canonical Church by the Primates and representatives of the world's 15 autocephalous Churches who gathered for the occasion.

Representing His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, was His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada and the Very Rev. David Brum, the Metropolitan's secretary.

Since the fall of communism, Orthodoxy in Ukraine has experienced a number of schisms, although the majority of parishes and faithful have remained loyal to Metro-

politan Volodymyr and his Church, a part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In his remarks at a reception for Metropolitan Vladimir, Bishop Seraphim noted the close ties enjoyed by the Orthodox Church in America and Ukrainian Church and expressed Metropolitan Herman's desire to develop even stronger contacts.

The celebration was marked by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves' recently reconstructed Dormition Cathedral, a concert which drew an audience of some 4,000, and other festivities. Ukrainian President Victor Yushenko and other state officials also participated in the celebration. ■

Pennsylvania parish celebrates 100 years

PATTON, PA – Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, pictured here as he was welcomed to SS. Peter and Paul Church by Mrs. Helen Gresko Kalenish, recently presided at the celebration of the parish's 100th anniversary.



The parish was established in 1904 by Mrs. Kalenish's father, George Gresko, Sr., and Peter Busha, Peter Somics, Anthony Pochvatilla, Vasil Baranick, and Vasil Milula.

Concelebrating with Archbishop Kyrill were Priestmonk David and Deacon John Olenyk. Singing the responses at the anniversary Divine Liturgy was a choir composed of faithful from SS. Peter and Paul parish; St. Michael Church, Irvona, PA; and St. Mary Church, Madera, PA, under the direction of Raymond Mundel. ■

Expanded facilities for expanding ministries

CRAWFORDSVILLE, IN – Members of Saint Stephen the First Martyr Church here muddied their shoes and quelled their shivers on Sunday, November 6, to offer prayers for the blessing of the renovation of their church.

The renovation will double the church's present capacity, thereby increasing prospects for evangelization and worship.

Since the parish's reception into the Diocese of the Midwest of the Orthodox Church in America in 2001, the parish has experienced steady growth, thereby necessitating the need for additional worship space.

"With more space, we plan to expand our ministries and to evangelize the surrounding area," said parishioner Maria Weir. "In recent years, the parish opened a bookstore to provide resources for seekers and formed a film discussion group that examines Christian themes in popular movies. Next year we plan to open our annual square dance, attended by members of several parishes in central Indiana, to the Crawfordsville community."

The Rev. David Maroney is rector of the active community. ■

Ohio women honor patron saint, help troops

PARMA, OH – Members of the women's club of Holy Trinity Church here recently adopted the Grand Duchess, Elizabeth the New Martyr, as their patron. In imitation of her ministry and in conjunction with the celebration of her feast on July 5, club members appealed to the faithful of their parish to collect a variety of essential goods to send to US troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, and other locations.

"We collected a large number of disposable cameras, letter writing materials, notebooks, sunglasses, books and magazines, word puzzle books, and hygiene items that will be given to the troops through the USO," said Mrs. Darlene Petrykowski, club president.

On Tuesday, July 5, after celebrating the Akathistos Hymn in honor of Saint Elizabeth, club members enjoyed a talk by Mother Mary Ann of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary Monastery, Canton, OH.

Saint Elizabeth, sister of Tsarina Alexandra of Russia and wife of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, was captivated by the beauty and spiritual depth of Orthodox Christianity. Yet her conversion was no mere formality. After her husband's assassination in 1905, she entered monastic life, established a monastery in Moscow, and dedicated her life to the poor and needy. She also ministered to sick and wounded soldiers, both Russian and German, during World War I. She was martyred, together with her companion Sister Barbara, by the Bolsheviks on July 5, 1918.

According to the Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky, rector of Holy Trinity Church, a relic of Saint Elizabeth is sealed into the parish's altar table. ■



Collecting essential items for US troops are [from left] Sonja Sepic, women's club secretary; Darlene Petrykowski, president; Paula Svilar, vice-president; and Fr. Vladimir Berzonsky,

Fr. Maroney blesses expansion.



Communities

Fr. Suda celebrates 40th anniversary

ALLISON PARK, PA – Hundreds of clergy and faithful joined Metropolitan Herman and Archbishop Kyrill of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania at St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral here on November 5-6, 2005 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Fr. Paul Suda's ordination to the priesthood.

Following the celebration of Great Vespers on Saturday evening, an anniversary banquet was held at Pittsburgh's Rivers Club Oxford Centre. Under the capable and often witty direction of toastmaster Gregory J. Nescott, the banquet program brought tears and laughter to the more than 250 guests.

Mary Ann Suda, eldest daughter of Fr. Paul and Mary, offered a moving tribute to her father, while Archbishop Kyrill described his 30-year relationship with Fr. Paul. After his remarks, Metropolitan Herman presented the Order of St. Innocent to the Sudas as everyone sang "Axios! He is worthy!"

Because of Fr. Paul's love of country music, the cathedral's "Country Chamber Choir" presented a medley of songs with lyrics written especially for the occasion. The "Altared Boys" – three talented parish teens – brought down the house with a country rap rendition of "Ramblin' Preacher Man."

Parish council president Jeffrey Dille presented the Sudas with an icon of their patron saints and St. Alexander, while event co-chairs Mary Wusylko and Larice Nescott presented a ruby necklace to Mary Suda. The Sudas also received a gift check on behalf of the parish, family, and friends.

The next morning, Metropolitan Herman and Archbishop Kyrill concelebrated the Liturgy with Frs. Robert Kondratick, Paul Suda, David Brum, Nicholas Timpko, and Patrick Reardon; Archdeacon Alexei Klimitchev; Protodeacon John Oleynik; and Deacon Wusylko. A breakfast prepared by the cathedral's women's association followed, during which the parish youth presented a mosaic of the Mystical Supper they made at vacation Church school to the Sudas. ■



Metropolitan Herman presents Order of St. Innocent to Fr. and Mrs. Suda.



Ohio students help Hurricane Katrina victims

WARREN, OH – Students from Holy Trinity Orthodox Christian Academy here, pictured above on the first day of school, assembled and sent health and school kits to Hurricane Katrina victims recent.

The project was coordinated by Deacon Ed Brisbine.

Holy Trinity Academy is one a number of schools belonging to Orthodox Christian Schools of Northeast Ohio, Inc., and draws students from four Warren parishes.

For additional information on OCS-NEO visit www.ocs-neo.org. ■



Choir raises funds for fire department, Katrina victims

JERSEY CITY, NJ – Fr. Joseph Lickwar and an honor guard from the Jersey City fire department here stood at attention outside SS. Peter and Paul Church here on Sunday, September 11, to welcome those who attended a benefit concert by the Spirit of Orthodox Choir marking the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The parish is less than one mile from the site of the former World Trade Center.

Directed by Aleksei V. Shipovalnikov, the 35-voice choir presented "Music of Remembrance and Hope" and raised over \$1,400.00 to assist the Jersey City Firefighters' Distress Fund and for the work of International Orthodox Christian Charities in aiding Hurricane Katrina victims. ■

New church consecrated in Colorado

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – On October 5 and 6, 2005, Metropolitan Herman joined Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the West and Bishop Benjamin of Berkeley to consecrate the recently constructed Holy Theophany Church at SS. Constantine and Helen parish here.



The consecration took place in conjunction with the annual assembly of the Diocese of the West. ■